

FOLLIES

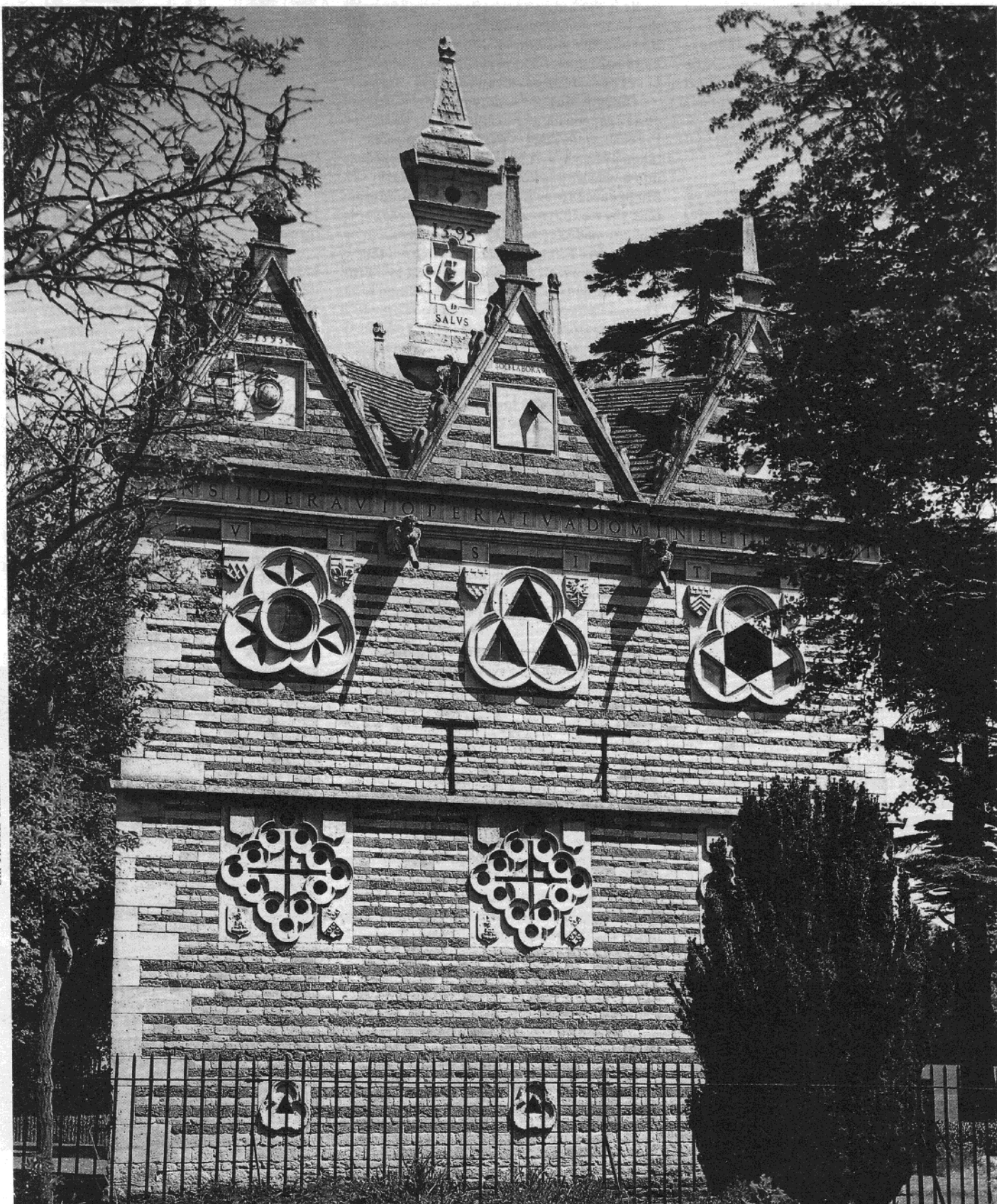
The Magazine of the Folly Fellowship

No.7 £2.00

Autumn 1990



SIR THOMAS TRESHAM'S TRIANGULAR LODGE IN RUSHTON, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE. PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFERY WHITELAW FROM THE FOLLY FELLOWSHIP PICTURE LIBRARY



The First Chinese Building in England?

MICHAEL COUSINS

THE RECENT PUBLICATION *Descriptions of Lord Cobham's Gardens at Stowe 1700-1750*¹, throws some interesting light on what was almost certainly the first Chinese building to appear in England. The structure was also one of the most enigmatic in that it had disappeared from Stowe by 1751, and one would naturally presume it had perished because of its ephemeral nature.

In 1979 Patrick Connor, in his *Oriental Architecture in the West*², put forward the hypothesis that the small house was not destroyed but removed to Wotton, home of

FROM BENTON SEELEY'S VIEWS OF THE TEMPLES AND OTHER ORNAMENTAL BUILDINGS IN THE GARDENS AT STOW, 1750



Hester Grenville, the sister of Lord Cobham. This 'summerhouse' amazingly still survives but is now to be found in Harristown, Co. Kildare.

A HISTORY

The earliest reference to the Chinese house that has so far come to light was made in an anonymous account of 1738. Three years earlier the very observant Jeremiah Miles passed through the Elysian Fields and would surely have noted the 'house built on piles' had it then existed.

Its position is known to have been in the Alder River beyond the Three Arched Building and just to the north of the Shell Bridge. Surprisingly Bridgeman's map of Stowe (published after his death by Sarah Bridgeman, in 1739)³, does not record the Chinese house. Even more inexplicable is the incorrectly annotated Shell Bridge, its nearest neighbour. The Elysian Fields had only just been completed by this time which may account for the inaccuracy⁴. The same mistake surfaced in Bickham's map of 1753 which appeared with *Sixteen Perspective Views*⁵ (in fact the Shell Bridge appears in two locations). Yet in his *Beauties of Stow*⁶ of that same year the accompanying 'curious general Plan of the Whole Gardens' was correct.

It was not until the middle of 1750, when Benton Seeley published *Views of Temples...*⁷ that an engraving of the Chinese house first appeared. A few months later George Bickham the Younger, who was to become a rival for the next thirteen years, pirated many of Seeley's views for the first edition of *The Beauties of Stow*⁸.

Bickham's engravings cannot, therefore, be viewed with much confidence and, in one illustration, he took mirror images of Seeley's views and drew the Chinese House adjacent to the Palladian Bridge. Sadly it was only after the departure of this small structure from Stowe that Bickham had his own views of the buildings made, 'Correctly Drawn on the Spot 1752... by Mons. Chatelain.'

On 20th May, 1751 the equally observant cousin of Jeremiah Miles, Dr. Pococke, noted that 'The Chinese house is taken away. Where the water was is turned into a vale with lawn'⁹. But before it had disappeared from Stowe, Sir Roger Newdigate took the trouble to make a partially dimensioned sketch of the Chinese house.

Thomas Whately seems to have been the first to remark on the 'Chinese room, in a little island' at Wotton, in 1765¹⁰. Unfortunately Thomas Jefferson, who made copious use of Whately's *Observations on Modern Gardening*, failed to notice the Chinese house when he visited in April 1786¹¹. And so this unique piece of Chinoiserie remained at Wotton for some two hundred years, virtually forgotten.

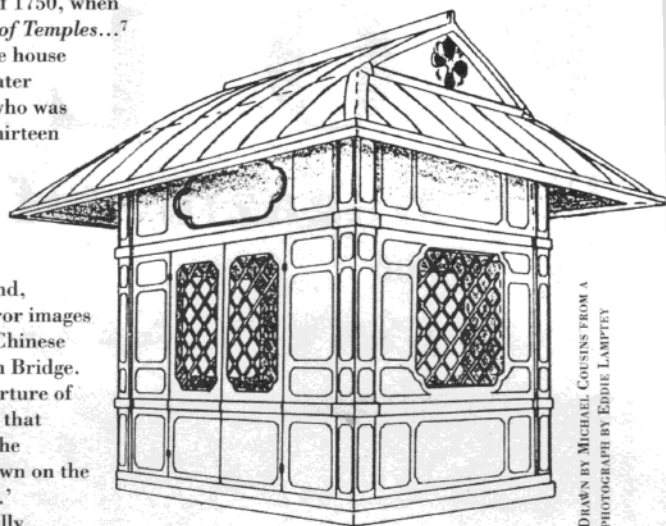
In 1929 Wotton was bought by Major Michael Beaumont who, in 1946, purchased Harristown House in Co. Kildare. Wotton was sold to the Society of Merchant Venturers, Bristol, but apart from a brief spell as a boys' school, the house remained empty. Either through sentiment or concern Major Beaumont bought the Chinese house, which had at some time been relocated next to the kitchen garden¹², and had it transported to Ireland in 1957.

In recent years the colourful paintings have been redone by Percy Willats but the damp climate has already erased the scenes from one side and the whole fabric is in need of conservation.

THE CHINESE HOUSE

From the various contemporary descriptions, the following picture of the Stowe Chinese House can be built up. The building was situated in the middle of an old pond, raised on piles and reached from the shore by 'steps like a bridge' adorned with Chinese vases with flowers in them. Around the outside was a gallery and rail (although not of Chinese fretwork). The wooden house consisted of a single room with four lattice windows and the graceful roof capped with 'fish' at each end.

The roof and outside were painted 'in the Chinese Taste', the latter by Francesco Sletter (variously spelt Sletea, Sleats, Slaughter & Slater), while the inside was wainscotted with 'India japann'd work'. Marchioness Grey also commented that 'a great many Old Screens have been cut to pieces (I fancy) to make it.'



DRAWN BY MICHAEL COUSINS FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY EDDIE LAMPEY

THE CHINESE HOUSE AT HARRISTOWN, VIEW FROM NORTH-WEST CORNER.

It was covered with sail-cloth to protect the lustre of the paintings.

Inside was a 'Chinese lady as if asleep, her hands covered by her gown', and in the pond itself were the 'figures of two Chinese birds about the size of a duck, which move with the wind as if living.'

CONJECTURE

Comparing Seeley's view and the Chinese House at Harristown, one cannot doubt they are the same building - the same cross on the vertical panels at each end of the gambrel roof and, of course, the painted panels. Each side contains a pair of windowed doors, a fact not easily reconciled with Seeley's engraving, which indicates single windows only. This may have been due to the limitations of the engraver, or Seeley's intent simply to convey an idea to the visitor. The diagonal lattice

DETAIL OF A PANEL FROM THE CHINESE HOUSE.



EDDIE LAMPEY

framework used for the windows is, however, identical.

Fortunately we can take this comparison a step further. One of the excellent entries in last year's Folly Fellowship / Lawson-Price Prize for Measured Drawings was the Chinese Summerhouse at Harristown, drawn by architectural student Eddie Lamptey. It is very satisfying to note that the Lawson-Price Prize has demonstrated its usefulness so soon after its inception.

Separated by over two hundred years, Sir Roger Newdigate's sketch and Mr. Lamptey's survey notes provide more intrigue. George Clarke's questioning of the accuracy of Sir Roger's measurements, 'correct to the nearest inch' begs further comment. One must not reject the possibility that he made the sketch for his own use, perhaps from an original drawing at Stowe, and altered the dimensions to suit; or equally that the dimensions were taken from the intended design which, for some reason, was modified during the actual course of fabrication, not such an uncommon practice as might first seem.

In fact none of the dimensions agree exactly, a few are close and most are generally of the correct proportion, and it is also difficult to say which was the elevation actually sketched.

It would be pleasing to confirm Dr. Connor's hypothesis, but unless further evidence comes to light there will always be a question mark raised by the unresolved anomalies.

Notes:

- 1 CLARKE, George (ed.); *Descriptions of Lord Cobham's Gardens at Stowe (1700-1750)*, Buckinghamshire Record Society, 1990. [rather than cite actual references, the various descriptions and quotations can be found in this excellent compilation and the reader should refer to this work directly]
- 2 CONNOR, Patrick; *Oriental Architecture in the West*, London, 1979
- 3 BRIDGEMAN Sarah; *General Plan of the Woods, Park and Gardens of Stowe... with several Perspective Views in the Gardens*, 1739
- 4 CLARKE, George; *The Gardens of Stowe*, Apollo, June 1973, p. 558-565 [particular reference to the accuracy of Bridgeman's map]
- 5 BICKHAM THE YOUNGER, George; *Sixteen Perspective Views, Together with a General Plan of the Magnificent Buildings and Gardens at Stow*, 1753 [it is also interesting to note that the 'u' and 'v' missing from the respective keys of Bridgeman's and Bickham's maps would tally with the Chinese house].
- 6 BICKHAM THE YOUNGER, George; *The Beauties of Stow...*, 1753
- 7 SEELEY, Benton; *Views of Temples, and other Ornamental Buildings, in the Gardens at Stow*, 1750
- 8 BICKHAM THE YOUNGER, George; *The Beauties of Stow...*, 1750
- 9 CARTWRIGHT, James Joel(ed.); *The Travels Through England of Dr. Richard Pococke* (Camden Society, Series ii, xlii, 1888/9, Vol. 1, p.165
- 10 WHATELY, Thomas; *Observations on Modern Gardening*, London, 1770, p.87 [written in 1765 - see John Dixon Hunt and Peter Willis (eds.): *The Genius of the Place*, London, 1988]
- 11 BETTS, Edwin Morris(ed.); *Memorandums Made on a Tour to Some of the Gardens in England [1786]*, Thomas Jefferson's Garden Book 1766-1824, American Philosophical Society, 1944, Vol. 22, p.112
- 12 NARES, Gordon; *Wotton House - Aylesbury*, Country Life, July 8, 1949, p.112-3 [About thirty years ago, Wotton was due to be demolished, to be replaced by a housing estate. The grounds had already been split into eight separate holdings when, with just two weeks to spare, the present owner intervened. The house was saved and subsequently re-united with its landscape].

New Crop: Follies in Western Scotland

WIM MEULENKAMP

NO ONE NEEDS TO BE REMINDED OF THE inaccessibility of large parts of Scotland. Follies and garden buildings loitering in and on glens and bens can therefore only be found out with great difficulty. Recently though, several publications have come up with new finds: Tim Buxbaum's thorough *Scottish Garden Buildings: From Food to Folly* presents quite a few hitherto undiscovered buildings, as does the excellent *Architectural Guides to Scotland* series, edited by Charles McKean. That there is more still to discover became evident on a recent trip to Western Scotland.

One doesn't go to Skye for Follies. It is simply not fair to an island that should first and foremost be visited for its landscape and atmosphere: The cairn is Scotland's favourite monument and though a heap of stones usually makes good folly material, most of these Scottish cairns are simply too new and are too much local Tourist Board to be anything but monuments. But the inscription on the Piper's Cairn at the spectacular ruin of Duntulm Castle on Skye's northernmost tip is worthy of inclusion:

*This cairn is to commemorate
the Macarthurs
hereditary pipers to
the Macdonalds of the isles
during the 18th century
their school of piping
stood at nearby Peingown
thig criogh air an t - saoghal
ach mairidh gaol is ceol
(the world will end
but love and music endureth)*

Naturally, the MacCrimmons, pipers to the MacLeods and buried at Dunvegan Castle, have their own memorial, at the old Piping College, Borreraig.

Southwards from Duntulm lies the small port of Uig, from which the ferry leaves for the Outer Isles. Overlooking the bay is a large, dumpy tower, round, with cross-slits. It is known locally as Captain Fraser's Folly and must date from the nineteenth century. Over the door is a stone that might have held an inscription, but, as is to be expected, it has completely weathered away. I haven't been able to find out anything about the jolly old captain.

Enough is known about Sir Hector Archibald MacDonald, whose monument is at Dingwall, firmly on the mainland. The general, who had risen from the ranks, was famed for the Battle of Omdurman. He shot himself in Paris in 1903. His memorial is a square, 100 feet tall tower with side-turret in the Mitchell Hill Cemetery, erected by subscribers and finished on 23 May 1907. The views are grandiose and the monument is in the best tradition of Folly towers.

Beaming ourselves to Mull, we encounter a totally different building: a brand new pavilion in what can only be described as the

Chinese-Gothick taste, set in the equally brand new Japanese garden of Torosay Castle, overlooking Duart Bay. There are some very good eighteenth century Italian statues in the older garden.

Saint Conan's Church, Lochawe, is a major find. It was built as a church, used as a church, and still functions as such today. It makes a beautiful Folly. Walter Douglas Campbell came to live with his mother at Loch Awe in the nineteenth century. Legend has it that she couldn't take the long drive to Dabhally church and so, naturally, Walter Campbell built her his own church, a chapel in fact. The building of it nevertheless took six years, from 1881 to 1886. Eventually he appears not to have been satisfied with it and he started his expansion of the church in 1907. Campbell died at the start of the First World War, but his sister Helen tried to complete the building. She died in 1927. The Trustees



SAINT CONAN'S CHURCH, LOCHAWE: A JUMBLE OF STYLES, A JUMBLE OF STONES

carried on the good work and in the 1930s Saint Conan's Church was finished. The guide (buy one and put some money in the box for the upkeep of this exquisite little monument) from which I pilfered this information also states that none of the stones that were used were quarried, but consisted of boulders that were found in the vicinity.

The folly of the thing is that Campbell used every available ecclesiastical style fashionable at some time in Scotland, even down to the druidic standing stones. The overall result is astounding: Arts and Crafts and good Victoriana. A small church, but changing from Saxon and Norman to Gothic and back again. Apse and ambulatory produce a satisfying effect, and when you have finished the rounds of the church (in the Bruce Chapel is a beautiful wood and alabaster figure of the old warrior) it would seem that calling this picturesque amalgam a Folly amounts to libel. But in true Folly-fashion bits and pieces used in this building came from other sources: screens from Eton College Chapel, a window from a medieval church, a bell from Skerryvore Lighthouse, wood from two old ships and so on. There is also a story about how a friend of Mr Campbell's deemed the design of the proposed apse dangerous. Campbell built a scale model and drove a steam roller over it. Not a scratch on the

model. Saint Conan's Church is usually open and can be found at the War Memorial. Lochawe (you'll miss it when you're speeding).

Speeding is what we did at the crossroads of the A78 - A77 from Kilmarnock to Prestwick, so I didn't find the time to investigate the classical monument that stands there: perhaps someone else wants to delve deeper into the matter.

By the time Ayr was reached I had an hour to kill, enough time to have a look at the towerette which formed part of the town's citadel from Cromwellian times, converted into an observation post in the nineteenth century by the then owner. Nothing much, except for the established name: Miller's Folly. It is in South Harbour Street, easily found, easily forgotten.

I am the kind of person who reads his guide books and Tourist Office leaflets hours, days or weeks after he has actually visited the place. So with Ayr's Wallace Tower: 113 feet high, gothic, and built to a design by the Edinburgh architect Thomas Hamilton between 1831 and 1834. The statue was done

by local boy James Thom who also did the once hugely successful sculptures of Tam O'Shanter and other Burns characters for the Burns Monument. It must have been that huge tower I noticed when I wandered the streets of Ayr in search of Food, not Follies.

After visiting the Burns Monument at Alloway, I caught sight of a castellated square dovecote just after Alloway on the A 77 in the direction of Maybole, left-hand side. For people who like that sort of thing.

Others, who like other things, may want to experience the Electric Brae (brae means slope, electric means nothing at all) - not a Folly, but a curiosity. The Tourist Information shack at Culzean Castle sells a fact sheet on it. You're supposed to feel as if you're driving downwards when instead you're driving upwards the hill (and vice versa). The area (on the A719 between Knowside and Drumshang) where this optical illusion (for that is what it is) occurs, is even signposted. Trust a Dutchman to experience nothing, nada, zilch. [On the other hand a Welshman was mightily impressed - Ed]

Talking of Culzean: the restoration programme of the garden buildings is coming along nicely, the aviary/pheasantry and Swan Pond Cottage by Lugar looks prim and prissy again, as well as the Camellia House (1818, James Donaldson). The other aviary (cum-tea-house), near Swan Pond as well, but also known under its alias the Pagoda, is still a shambles, but just because of that looking

much more interesting that the Lugar thingie. It is supposed to have been built in 1860, but looks earlier. One other oversight has been the rustic hut in Culzean's walled garden, together with a grotty rockery.

At the village of Straiton is supposed to be the Hunter-Blair monument - an obelisk on top of a hill. Haven't seen it though. Driving down the A77 from Maybole to Girvan you're in for a small surprise. Just before entering Turnberry is Turnberry Lodge: a house with a castellated eyecatcher facade. Nothing fancy, although these buildings are the mainstay of Follydom.

Driving southwards along the spectacular coast, Girvan has rather a good obelisk on a green in the centre, overlooking the mega spectacular Ailsa Craig: a huge pudding dropped from a plane and sitting somewhat lost in the middle of the sea. Also at Girvan is the Stumpy Tower: the local jail, to which a steeple was added in 1827 and a clock followed later, given by Sir Hew Hamilton.

At Stranraer the North West Castle Hotel, near the town's pier is a neo-gothic, castellated

A completely different Folly is presented by Kelburn Cottage, on the left-hand side of the A75 from Newton Stewart to Creetown. It is one of those gardens that are so decorated with gnomes and things worse than gnomes, that it becomes one of those trinkets some people happily drive an hour for just to see it, whilst others gladly take a half hour detour in order to avoid it.

Creetown itself has a clocktower in much the same style as Gatehouse of Fleet (see Follies), probably by the same architect. There's a crinklecrankle bridge as well.

The inevitable obelisk on top of a hillock this time stands on the left-hand side of the A75 just before Gatehouse of Fleet. I didn't bother to look for the inscription and it will, of course, turn out to be hugely interesting.

Kirkcudbright is a difficult town. Billed as an almost Mediterranean resort sporting huge amounts of artists, you immediately find it does have a steady water supply, mainly pouring down, and the inevitable string of potteries kept by men and women who actually wear those Genuine Breton Shirts advertised

in Private Eye. But spend another half hour there and you just might start to appreciate the river and some of the older churches and alleyways. Jessie M. King and E.A. Hornel did live there (no need to consult the encyclopedia, they are minor but quite passable Edwardian artists). In fact Hornel's house and studio, Broughton

House, High Street, is now a museum and well worth a visit. Don't miss the garden, part of which is a Japanese garden designed by the painter himself. But the interesting bit for us will be the gothick gazebo, round and castellated, which stands in the back garden of its neighbour, no. 10. The facade at the back of the house itself is in the same style, and the date would be late eighteenth, early nineteenth century. Best view is from the walk along the River Dee.

Dumfries also has its Folly: the Camera Obscura (still in working order, and part of the Dumfries Museum). It is situated on Corbely Hill and was originally a windmill. It was truncated in 1836 and turned into a Camera Obscura. The architect was Walter Newall, a native. The thing that did it, was the addition of a good number of decorative ('Egyptian' according to one source) windows and entrance, making it not just another converted windmill, but quite an acceptable classical building.

Oh, and about these pipers: they appear to be best at Skye. The ones at Inverness and Glencoe were quite atrocious. No complaints about the Follies.



LEFT: THE BURNS MONUMENT, ALLOWAY.
ABOVE: CAMELLIA HOUSE, CULZEAN CASTLE
RIGHT: THE PAGODA: AVIARY AND TEA HOUSE,
CULZEAN CASTLE (PICTURES BY AUTHOR)

house built by Sir John Ross (1777-1856), of Arctic fame. He wanted to build his house as a ship, didn't succeed completely, but both the interior and exterior manage to convey a nautical flavour. The name of the house was, of course, derived from his searches for the North-West Passage. When he was seventy-five he sailed his ship the Felix from Stranraer in search of Admiral Sir John Franklin. Ross couldn't find him, but managed to get home safely. It is the Scottish counterpart of Hampstead's Admiral's House.

En route to the Mull of Galloway (yes, folly hunters are allowed to indulge in a bit of natural scenery now and again - mind you don't overdo it, bad for morale), I passed what looked like a group of folly-like objects at Chapel Rossan, along the A716 in the direction of Drummore. There is a lodge with gothick windows, resembling an ecclesiastical building. Then, on the right-hand side, a neo-baronial house, painted in colours too glossy and its size just a tiny bit too small not to be a folly. The last object was a tower on the seaside, glimpsed between the trees near the hamlet of Balgown. Sadly, I lacked the time to investigate further.

Straw Follies

Two follies on a scale more monumental than is usually attempted in the late 20th century have recently been made at Holkham Hall in Norfolk and at the Cathedral Close, Salisbury. They were built from straw bales: perhaps the cheapest, if least permanent, building material there is.

Both were made by the sculptor and garden architect, George Carter, who was commissioned in both instances by public bodies rather than private individuals: an unusual example of public patronage for structures that were at once whimsical and ephemeral.

Inspirational Straw

GEORGE CARTER

I HAVE ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT STRAW BALES stacked randomly in fields after harvesting have strong sculptural and architectural qualities. They often look like the ruins of some grand classical structure that has been laid waste by a massive explosion or earthquake. My idea has been to reconstruct these fragments back into a grand and monumental building, using, in 18th century jargon, "the genius of the place" as my guide.

GEORGE CARTER



RIGHT: ARCHITECTURAL HAYSTACK FOR THE GREEN THEATRE.
ABOVE: HOLKHAM PYRAMID, 1989.

GEORGE CARTER



near the house. Kent's scheme took the form of a wide theatrical amphitheatre forming a sort of stage-set view from the garden front of the house.

In response to Kent's theatrical scheme I made a large structure on a different, very open, sweeping piece of landscape south of the obelisk and at right angles to the 2 mile long ilex avenue. It consisted of a wide, low exedra of straw blocks linked by low walls. The diameter of this forecourt was about 120 ft. Centred on this frame was a peristyle of four massive straw columns 20ft high. The frieze was capped by a red painted wooden fret representing flames or the sun's rays. Aligned on the central opening of the peristyle and set about 250ft behind it was a tall thin pyramid, about 25ft high and capped by a red painted wooden disc. The ensemble was axised east/west so that the setting sun gradually disappeared behind the disc and the sunset was enhanced by the red zigzags in front.

At the end of the allotted span (the installation took place in August 1989) the stubble was ploughed round the structure and the whole ensemble was set alight under the careful supervision of the Holkham Estate.

This spectacular finale took only 3 minutes to subside into an unrecognisable heap.

STRAWHENGE AT SALISBURY CATHEDRAL CLOSE

Here I was commissioned by the Right Rev. J.M. Bickersteth to make a large scale version of Stonehenge as part of the Festival organised there this May to heighten public awareness of "Green" issues.

Rather than attempt a literal reconstruction of Stonehenge, I chose to take Inigo Jones' conjectural reconstruction as my inspiration. Jones wrote the first book to be published (1655) on the mystery of Stonehenge, and in it he willfully misread the geometry of the structure in order to impose Roman architectural principles onto its design. He believed Stonehenge to have been built by the Romans as a temple to Coelus, god of the heavens. Whether or not Jones got it right, he certainly appreciated that Stonehenge is a structure of sophisticated geometry. My reconstruction used his

configuration of circles, triangles and hexagons; figures with appropriately astrological connections.

The structure was built right next to the Cathedral and was built to half scale because of the restricted space. Its proximity to the Cathedral somewhat dwarfed even its 74 tonnes bulk. The outer circle was made of columns using stacks of three large oblong bales laid over sheep hurdle lintels. The inner circle was made of coupled circular columns 4 bales high. At the centre hung a large straw sphere. Even though the henge was at the centre of the city, the straw had such sound insulating properties that its interior was most unnaturally quiet and still.

FIELDS OF VISION

Both schemes were prototypes for what is intended to be a series of events under the title *Fields of Vision*. *Fields of Vision* is intended to forge exciting links between artists and farmers, culture and agriculture. It will focus public attention on farms and the farming landscape and heighten awareness of the countryside by transforming familiar scenes.

HOLKHAM HALL

At Holkham Hall I was commissioned by Eastern Arts and the Norfolk Committee of



THE SKETCH OF GEORGE CARTER'S FIRST PROPOSAL FOR THE STRAW VISTA AT HOLKHAM HALL

British Food and Farming Year to produce a structure to celebrate British Food and Farming. The project was underwritten to a large extent by Viscount Coke and the

IN THE NEWS

❖ It's difficult to keep Jeffrey Archer out of the press - at the height of the Iraqi crisis in August, traditionally the silly season and the time for starting world wars, he popped up in *The Times*, talking about his folly at Grantchester in Cambridgeshire, 'built by Samuel Page Widnall in 1857 who was a Victorian nutcase and a very talented man who built this for fun.' The reason for the piece is that Mary Archer recently added to the folly and had the extension officially opened by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, John Major. Could this signal the beginning of governmental approval for follies? Can we have a grant to buy a desk top publishing system?

❖ Next time you're boating past Temple Island, downstream from Henley-on-Thames, you could enjoy a few moments of harmless hooliganism by triggering off the security lights guarding the newly restored Wyatt's Temple. Getting too close to the island should do it. You could always claim it's a protest against the new owner painting the temple brown instead of white. Can this really be true?

❖ Edinburgh's Lighting Design Partnership have created what appears to be an electronic folly tower at the railway station in Oslo. The lights round the tower get brighter as the week goes on; quite important in a country where the sun sets in the evening and doesn't rise again for six months. Does this make Monday mornings any better, assuming the lights will then be virtually at their dimmest?

❖ The Shell Grotto at Mount Edgcumbe in Cornwall is being restored by Diana Reynell and Roger Capps. English Heritage have made a grant towards the work, and the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe have raised £2,500.

❖ The Museum of Garden History at St. Mary-at-Lambeth, Lambeth Palace Road, London SE1 is holding an exhibition of **Historic Garden Tools** from October 17th to November 25th, entrance free. This is your once-in-a-lifetime chance to marvel at a Glass Cucumber Straightener, shudder at The Wykeham Eradicator, ponder on a pair of Grape Bottles and wonder why it's shut on Saturdays.

❖ Jay Fairs are holding a series of antique fairs at **Fawley Court**, Henley-on-Thames on November 11th, February 10th and May 12th, so if you've ever felt diffident about walking through the grounds of a Polish convent to view the huge domed sham ruin to be found there (*Follies*, p.220), now's your chance to do so with a clear conscience.

❖ The Convent at **Stourhead**, lovingly restored by architect Christopher Bowerbank, was the subject of a feature in *The Times* this summer.

❖ **Creech Grange Arch** at Steeple in Dorset, one of the best eyecatchers in the country, is being repointed at a cost of £5,000 by the National Trust.

❖ Still in Dorset and still no buyers for **Horton Tower**, **Sturt's Folly**, as we go to press. We would not like to see it converted into a bijou holiday residence; we want to see it preserved as the most spectacular ruined folly tower in Britain. But we haven't got the money to buy it.

❖ Two new castles this year: one from the late L. Ron Hubbard, founder of Scientology, who designed a replica of the eleventh century **Tonbridge Castle** as an 'international college' in East Grinstead, Sussex. Work started in 1965 and it was completed this year, unlike the late lamented **Jezeel Temple** in Gillingham.

MIKE CORTON



❖ The other is from the mega-rich and exceedingly kind and generous (we hope he's reading this) John Paul Getty II, who has built a £2 million flint castle to house his collection of medieval manuscripts in **Wormsley**, Hereford and Worcester.

❖ A brand new folly (well, in name) has just been completed in **Middleton Tyas**, near **Richmond** in North Yorkshire. **Tempest's Folly** is a detached three storey house in a new residential development, which has been deliberately designed to look like a dovecote. Malcolm Tempest, the developer, says "I don't see why everything these days should be bland and rational." He's also left out the internal walls, to allow the purchaser to devise his own layout. A snip at £100,000. Full marks.

❖ If you want to throw a party in a folly, then **Perrott's Folly** in Birmingham can be yours. Write to Christopher Walton, Chairman, Perrott's Folly Society, Monument Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.

❖ The most megalomaniac folly of the twentieth century to date must surely be the **Basilica of Our Lady of the Peace** in **Yamoussoukro**, in the Ivory Coast, built by President Felix Houphouet-Boigny. We hope to have a full illustrated account of this astounding structure in a future issue.

LOST & FOUND

Mike Corton informs us that the restoration work has been completed on the octagonal tower at **Conishead Priory**, Cumbria (see *Follies* p. 374). It is situated on top of **Hermitage Hill**, where one would naturally expect to find a hermitage! There is, or was a hermitage of which only the base is now visible, and also a grotto. The form of the latter is a short man-made tunnel in the hill with two entrances, much filled with foliage and debris. It is on private land but apparently one can still walk through it. Maps of 1932 also show a second tower (remains of) next to the tower still standing today.

On the west bank of **Coniston Lake** is a

FINSTHWAITE SPIRE.

real enigma, 'The Labyrinth'. It is not a building but a series of mounds in a spiral pattern, planted with ornamental trees and bushes. Sadly it is now overgrown and appears as nothing more than a round copse. Any information on this would be greatly welcomed. An even more obscure monument is 'The Spire', to be found in what is known as **Spire Wood**, nr. **Finsthwaite** (map ref: SD 356865). It appears as an obelisk that has been somewhat flattened but why it was built and by whom is a mystery.

A short walk from the 'Hospice of **Hampsfell**' Mr Corton also came across a small, two storey castellated tower, probably built to adorn the **Longlands Estate**. Nothing is known of its history as of yet, and although the exterior is reasonably sound the inside has been gutted and the roof gone. As to the Hospice itself, is it actually a folly, as it was built to fulfil a valid purpose: "the shelter and entertainment of travellers over the fell"?

Jeff Cousins and several other members inform me that the tower-cum-dovecote at **Merstham** succumbed to a falling tree during the January storms, almost slicing it in two!

Our thanks again to Jonquil Phelan, for bringing us news of two grottoes on the Isle of Wight. The first is in the grounds of the 'Fernbank Hotel', **Shanklin** (map ref: SZ

579809), and now functions as a store for garden materials. The hotel is c.1850 but the grotto seemingly older and probably part of the grounds of a larger estate originally. Sadly little remains of the shell and fossil lining. The other grotto is a prim Victorian affair at Bonchurch (map ref: SZ 576781), more akin to a tiny chapel complete with water tap inside. It bears a modern metal plaque:

This memorial grotto was commissioned in 1868 by Mrs Margaret Huish as a memorial to her late husband, Captain Mark Huish, who followed a military career by becoming a railway magnate before retiring to Bonchurch where nearby in Mitchell Avenue, opposite the bowling green, he built several houses, he also initiated the local geological collection.



LONGLANDS TOWER

Nearby is another oddity, a pyramid of stone set in the wall and also bearing a modern plaque:

This pyramid of stone was erected in 1773 and is an example of stone quarried in the vicinity. This was at the time shipped from Bonchurch to be used at Portsmouth Harbour.

Both of these curiosities have been preserved by the Ventnor Town Council - to their great credit.

Exeter is full of surprises, and Lawrence Hunt has responded to the request for information on the tower in Victoria Park Road (see newsletter # 4). The last part of his letter says it all 'I find it delightfully ironic that having travelled the country looking at follies that I find one literally 100 yards from where I live'.

The house and grounds in which the folly stands have recently changed hands and the new owner is very proud of her tower. Nothing has come to light of its history, although the owner thinks it was built to offer a view of the Cathedral from the garden (before the prospect was ruined by the modern building). Built of red brick, two storied, and

battlemented, it comes across more as a gazebo than folly tower. Access to the first floor is via wooden steps although there is very little room once inside. The basement is presently used as a tool shed. The tower looks more recent than the 'Regency' house and is probably mid-Victorian if not later. Perhaps we have another 'Jonathan's Folly'.

Near this tower there is a ruined gazebo in the grounds of a house called 'Larkbeare'. The original house, now demolished, dated from 1870. The gazebo, in very poor repair, is earlier than the current house and may be seen from the far side of the river near the Maritime Museum.

Staying with Mr Hunt in Exeter - the Bishop's Palace garden is bounded on one side by the red city wall which from the garden appears as a high, vegetated bank. Through this wall is an old exit, created for a former Bishop, consisting of a short gated tunnel which emerges on the far side through medieval bastion tower. Around this tunnel, on the garden side, there is much loose rubble and above the tunnel there appears to be an attempt to create two decorative arches. When viewed from a distance it does resemble a grotto of sorts. The grounds, incidentally, may now be visited on free guided tours run by the City Council's 'Red Coat Guides' throughout the summer.

More news on the grotto at Ponsbourne House, Hertfordshire. Raleigh Hancock thinks that it was made by the religious order of nuns who owned the place for a good many years up to the 1970s, and believes the room in which it is was the last addition to Ponsbourne by his great grandfather, James William Carlile. He built much of the existing house and various estate buildings, cottages etc., dying in 1909. It is apparent from various postcards of Ponsbourne in Mr Hancock's possession that the 'grotto room' and cupola porch leading down to the garden did not exist in 1905. He also believes that there is or was a huge tank under the room from which water was pumped up to the top of the grotto.

Leamington Spa has a few savory 'tit-bits' to offer us, as Bob Hiron recently noticed. In 1846, having already secured and renamed the original Newbold Gardens as the Jephson Gardens, the Jephson Memorial Committee decided to have the popular doctor sculptured by Peter Hollins. Not content with this, they decided to house the statue in a Corinthian Temple, built of bath stone by Squirhill and opened on 20th May, 1849. The gardens are now public and also contain an obelisk to Edward Willes erected in 1875 (although he died in March, 1847), with an inscription which reads 'to whom Leamington is indebted for the site of these gardens'.

At the west end of Holly Walk and dating from 1880 is another obelisk which originally incorporated a drinking fountain. All quite fitting as the memorial was raised by public subscription to Alderman Henry Bright 'to whose untiring exertions this town is chiefly indebted for its supply of pure water'.

Moving across to Hockley Heath we come upon another of these tapering monuments. Various stories have been attached to the Umberlade Obelisk, half a mile east of Umberlade Park, which was the abode of Lord Archer in Warwickshire. As usual we have the burial place of a favourite horse;



GAVESTON'S CROSS

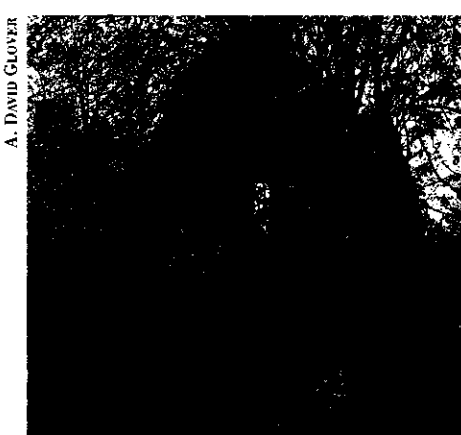
another story associates it with Lord Archer and astronomy, but the most plausible, although unsubstantiated, is that it commemorates his Lordship's elevation to the peerage in 1747.

Possibly not a folly, but a nice gruesome note to conclude Bob Hiron's labours is that on Gaveston's Cross just to the north of Warwick (map ref: SP 289676). In the middle of a small copse stands a stone cross on top of four, closely-arranged, square pillars. The plaque relates the grim story:

*In the Hollow of this Rock,
Was beheaded,
On the 1st Day of July, 1312,
By Barons lawless as himself,
PIERS GAVESTON, Earl of Cornwall:
The Minion of a hateful King:
In Life and Death,
A memorable Instance of Misrule.*

To conclude for the moment, A. David Glover has spotted another one of those charming, totally out of place, gateways, beautifully coloured with time and bearing the inscription 'Avenue des Hironnelles'. It can be found along the A658 south of Pool, nr. Otley in West Yorkshire.

AVENUE DES HIRONDELLES ARCH



A. DAVID GLOVER

Danube Follies

JONATHAN HOLT

THE TWO CITIES OF BUDAPEST AND VIENNA have always had strong links. The Austro-Hungarian empire was a glorious period in the region's history and if Vienna was the dominant partner, Budapest always managed to hold its own as a city of culture and charm. Even in the not-so-distant era of the communist hegemony, Budapest was an important trading centre significant beyond the confines of the Iron Curtain. Barriers may be placed on the land or in the minds of the people, but geography is the dominant factor in uniting these two cities, and no more permanent feature exists than the River Danube.

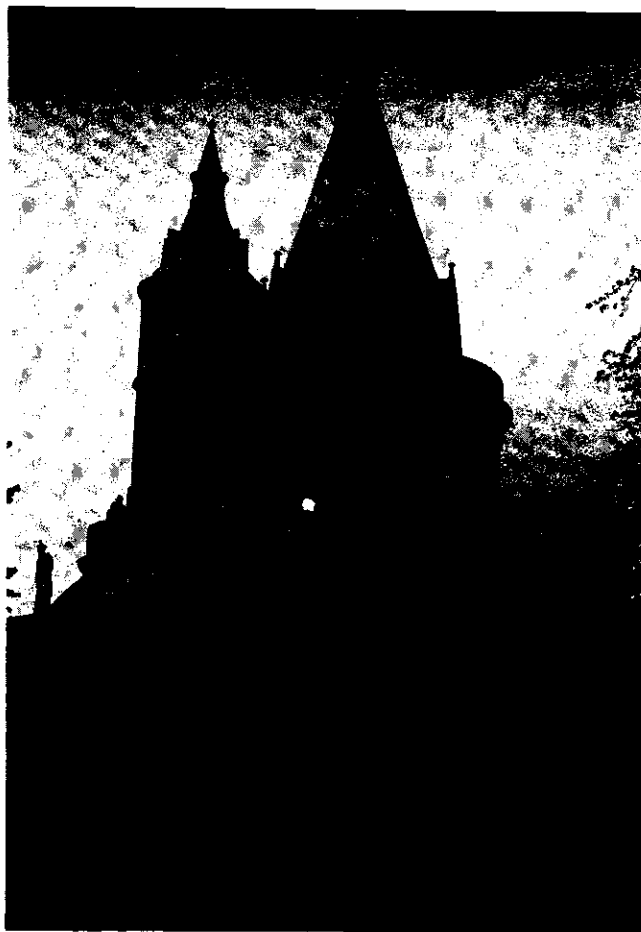
As for follies, the two cities have several treats in store, and on the grand scale. Starting in the capital of Hungary, few tourists miss the Fishermen's Bastion. High on Castle Hill in the old district of Buda, this is unusual in its style - Romanesque - and secondly in its long and complicated layout. Basically consisting of six conical towers, reminiscent of the heads of mythical warriors, these features are connected by covered walkways similar to the cloisters of a monastery. The whole ensemble measures about two hundred metres long and has several angles and levels which afford excellent views over the Danube and low-lying Pest, the commercial part of the city.

With reference to fishermen, the altitude of these ramparts - some couple of hundred metres above the river - is your first suggestion of unreality. However in the Middle Ages an area behind the neighbouring Matthias Church embraced a fish market, and in the eighteenth century local fishermen were responsible for defending the fortifications. The construction of this monument came much later, towards the end of the nineteenth century. It stands in extravagant memory to the men who, in the popular imagination at least, defended Budapest against the various hordes of ravaging invaders, most notably the Turks - if not very successfully.

The monument displays some curious features such as statues of kings and warriors, sculptures of lions and dragons, lamps on staircases, stone gutters and off-shoots. Under the largest and most ornate tower there is a museum, now apparently closed, as well as a wine cellar and dance bar. But the most luxurious place of relaxation has its patio adjoining the Bastion - the Hilton Hotel. Great follies need great accommodation to admire them from.

Some battlements may be shot through in some parts of some cities. It all depends on their strategic importance. Old Buda was so crucial that the Germans established their headquarters up near the Fisherman's Bastion rather than in the more imposing edifice of Vajdahunyad Castle. Situated in Pest's City Park, this was too far from the natural barrier of the Danube to be able to stop any ravaging hordes at the most crucial point in Budapest.

As sham castles go, Vajdahunyad is exceptionally intact as well as serviceable as a museum of agriculture. Penetrating beyond its bridge that does not draw up and its

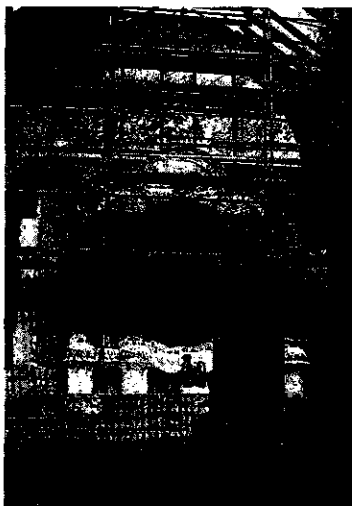


JONATHAN HOLT

LEFT: FISHERMAN'S BASTION, BUDAPEST.
BELOW: HUNDERTWASSERHAUS, VIENNA, WITH BRITISH TELEPHONE BOX.
BOTTOM LEFT: ORIENTAL TEMPLE AND GOD AT 26 HUTTELBERGSTRASSE, VIENNA.
BOTTOM CENTRE: VAJDAHUNYAD SHAM CASTLE, BUDAPEST.
BOTTOM RIGHT: BORY-VAR: JENO BORY'S SHAM CASTLE, SZEKESFEHVAR, HUNGARY.
BOTTOM FAR RIGHT: TARODI-VAR: ISTVAN TAROD'S SHAM CASTLE, SOPRON, HUNGARY.



JONATHAN HOLT



JONATHAN HOLT



JONATHAN HOLT

unlowerable portcullis, you may be given to believe that this is another Cardiff Castle or its smaller version Castell Coch, the extravagance of an aristocrat with too much money to waste. No, this is a serious monument to the Hungarian nation, celebrating its millenium in 1896. It claims to reproduce the destroyed castle of the Hunyadi family in Transylvania, which later became part of Romania. A hodge-podge of architectural history - Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque - its pieces were assembled from various regions of Hungary. Some features are the stuff of an Errol Flynn movie, with turretted dungeons, assault passages, knight's chamber, church gate ornamented with statues and abbey cloisters.

German is the language of Austria too, and our tour next takes us to a place which has the difficult task of balancing the desire to advertise itself while keeping the ravaging tourist and the eager folly-hunter out of its

interior. This is the Hundertwasserhaus, an example of architecture which simultaneously exhibits the lurid, colour-madness of a Gaudi building and shows the sensitivity and farsightedness of visionary urban planning.

Environmentalist painter Friedreich Hundertwasser has worked in several parts of Austria creating designs on buildings which people can relate to easily. The exhibition on the ground floor of the Hundertwasserhaus displays examples of his work including a church whose exterior he painted in bright colours. A similar style perpetuates in this edifice situated in Lowengasse in a downtown district of Vienna, completed in 1985 as a collaboration with the City Council for its tenants.

This is a block of flats, the like of which you are unlikely to find elsewhere. The ensemble consists of up to eight storeys but reducing in number in a kind of tumbling irregularity. The exterior wall of each flat is

painted a different bright colour, giving each tenant a sense of individuality.

Some of the strong hue of the paint is diffused by ivy which creeps up the walls like the green tentacles of a land bound octopus. Trees have also taken root on upper levels and fixed to the roofs and balconies are a variety of objects which are pure fancy: a couple of onion domes as well as numerous statues of lions, eagles and Michaelangelo's David, standing supreme. Supporting the first floor above the entrance courtyard are columns in various forms, some thin, some bulging, but all with broken ceramic pieces, reminiscent of Antoni Gaudi in Barcelona. The public bar on the first floor completes the sense of community that this development has created, an achievement about which many of the fifty families living here feel strong enough to put onto the video which is shown continuously in the exhibition room. The interior is off limits for tourists and so the gold fish bowl effect is reduced to the ground floor and the bar. Folly tenants need their privacy like everyone else.

Occasionally penetrable is the Villa Wagner at Number 26 Huttelsbergstrasse, a leafy avenue on the western outskirts of Vienna. The only snag is that you have to get together a group of at least six people to visit it. (Folly Fellows - what are you doing next weekend?) The architect was Otto Wagner, one of the most significant figures in the

Artistic flamboyance is obvious everywhere. The pergolas to either side of the main buildings have been enclosed with blue stained glass, to form a studio on the left and a sitting-room on the right hand side. They are the most attractive features of the house, without the touches of mischievous extravagance that marks the rest of the estate.

To one side of the house is a curious creation. An oriental temple, at present undergoing restoration and shrouded in scaffolding, and in front, the bust of a fierce-looking bearded god set on a plinth. To the other side of the house, down by the main gate, is a pink chalet charmingly fitting into the woods like a fairy house.

There is little to connect these four follies in style or (lack of) rationale. One is Palladian, the second is Post-modern, the third is Romanesque and the fourth is a muddle of Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque. All you can say they have in common is being worth five stars in any folly-hunter's guide and being close to the irresistible, if not always blue Danube.

One Day in Hungary

GWYN HEADLEY

DRIVING FROM BUDAPEST TO VIENNA ON business this summer, I prevailed upon

Neuschwanstein in Frimley, a gigantic fairytale castle with galleries, towers, turrets, parapet walks, arcades, fountains, statues, bastions, terraces, halls, belfries - everything dear to the heart of a folly builder, all gloriously fake. The incongruity of the massive castle in such humdrum surroundings was the first shock of pleasure, to be followed by astonishment and delight that such a brooding nagian folly could not only survive but flourish under forty years of Communist rule.

Jenő Bory was born in Székesfehérvár in 1879. As a stony expression of his love for his wife Jenőné, he began building the castle on a hill on what were then the outskirts of the town in 1923 - Hungary's equivalent of Clytha Castle or the Taj Mahal, except his wife was alive to appreciate this monumental gesture. Work continued for nearly forty years, interrupted by the war and delayed by subsequent damage to the building, until Bory's death in 1959. It became his family home and an artist's workshop - Bory was a prominent sculptor and architect. Now the rambling halls, courtyards, terraces and rooms of the castle house his 500 piece collection of works of art which includes important pieces by leading Hungarian artists as well as his own, his wife's and his daughter's work.

Bory was filled with the desire to create a monumental, artistic work in stone. "His love poetry, carved in marble and shaped in concrete, testify to his happy marriage," says the guide book (only available in Hungarian).

A hundred miles away in Sopron, just on the Austrian border, stands another sham castle, Taródi-Vár - The Castle of Tarod. This was even harder to find, until a friendly policeman drew a map which led us into the pine-covered hills above the town, past the trade union resort homes and hotels and an eye-catching little church to a dead end. "Taródi-Vár?" I enquired of a healthy young trade unionist out for a hike (I was getting pretty fluent by now). She giggled and pointed at a tower rising out of the trees in front of us.

We hadn't expected a portecullis. We hadn't expected a drawbridge. We hadn't expected a full-blown castle, but that's what we found. István Taródi decided to build a castle in 1945, and immediately started work on a 24 foot high wooden folly in his parents' garden, which he completed the following year. He demolished it in 1951 and re-erected it on a newly acquired site on the outskirts of town. In 1960, with the help of his sons, he decided to turn the wooden building into a proper stone castle, ingeniously difficult to photograph well enough to convey an impression of its bulk. The inside of the gateway bears this inscription:

HANC ARCEM PARVAM
AEDIFICAVIT
STEPHANUS TARODI
TRIBUS CUM FILIIS
AEDIFICARE COEPIIT
MCMLI. II AEC
TABULA POSITA EST
MCMLXVII

The design was based on Somoskö Castle in the county of Nógrád, and took twenty five years to complete, while the *Reader's Digest* was telling us how all central Europeans were

building of Vienna around the turn of the century.

Although the Villa Wagner is not typical of this movement, this is a house remarkable in many aspects, built as the architect's country residence in a secluded location. Now the owner is Ernst Fuchs, a painter who has added decoration to the facade.

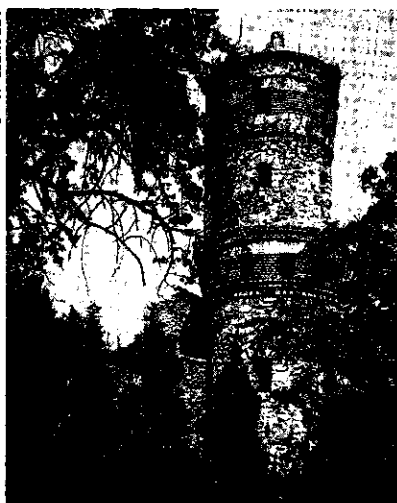
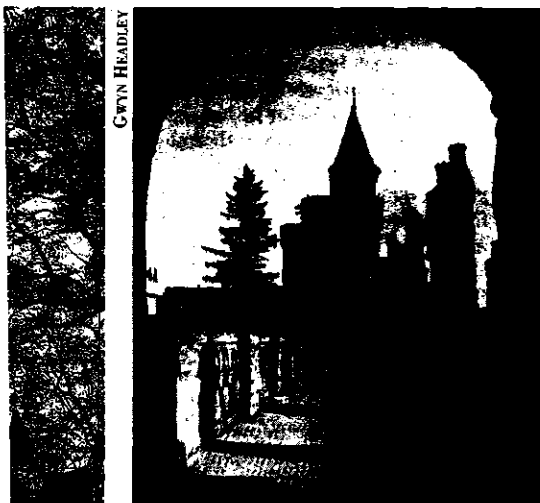
He has made a folly of chinoiserie out of what was a pleasant if run-of-the-mill colonnaded mansion. In this playground of the imagination, a mother of creation stands at the front, her big belly jutting out. Urns decorate the balustrades and staircases and high up on the facade are marble tablets with the inscriptions:

SINE ARTE SINE AMORE NON EST VITA
(Life without art or love is no life at all)

ARTIS SOLA DOMINA NECESSITAS
(A house only needs art to be a home)

my American colleague Mike Shatzkin to accept my plans for a small detour. "There's no point getting to Vienna early at the weekend," I argued. "This is a great chance to get to see rural Hungary." Mike, who gets nervous if he's more than five minutes from downtown Manhattan or an equivalent metropolis, dubiously agreed.

So we headed for the tongue-twisting town of Székesfehérvár, about forty traffic jam-filled miles southwest of the capital, where a Budapest publisher had told me there was a castle built by a sculptor in a suburban street. She was right, more right than we could ever have hoped. We had much trouble finding it (my Hungarian is not fluent), but once there it was inconceivable that anyone could miss it. We found Bicskei Utca and drove down the unmade road past neat, Westernised suburban villas with Saturday people watering their lawns and trimming hedges, past No.52, No.54, No.56 and there was No.58; like



living in abject terror and slavery. The materials used to build the folly filled the equivalent of two hundred railway wagons.

I hope the gnomish crone (what's the best word for a male crone?) who met us at the castle gateway was not Mr. Taródi. We were short of change, and he extracted ten times the posted admission charge from us. "Heck, that's nearly a dollar," complained Mike. But it couldn't have been Taródi, for we have his reasons for wanting to build a modern medieval castle. "First, a pleasant and useful way of using free time; second, a love of building; and third, a yearning to create something. Add to these a love of all things beautiful and a playful nature - and you have the Castle of Tarod." What a nice man he must be.

Sopron had another surprise, a branch of Marks and Spencer in the High Street. Apparently it's the only one in Eastern Europe. We had time for a final folly, a more traditional one this time, a belvedere temple on a slight eminence overlooking the huge, shallow Neusiedler See - sorry, Lake Fertő in



THE GLORIETTE, FERTŐBOZ, HUNGARY

Hungarian, twenty miles long and no deeper than six feet anywhere. At Fertőboz, between Balj and Hidégseg, the Gloriette is signposted, and it's no more than a five minute jog up the hill from the road. The view is enormous, flat and featureless, and shortened by the smog which covers Europe these days. The Gloriette, built in 1802, is a small, shabby domed rotunda with three arches flanked by Ionic pilasters with a demi-lunette in the back wall. The inscription on the front of the interior frieze reads:

JOSEPHO. AVSTRIACO. PALATINO. HUNGARICAE

and on the back:

EREXIT. COMES. FRANCISCVS. SZECIENYI
RENOV. COM. ANDREAS. SZECIENYI. 1943

It is now due for another RENOV. as soon as possible.

A good day. The tremendous surprise is that under Communism individuals were allowed to indulge their flights of fancy in a way which would be inconceivable in our liberal West. Nothing approaching the size or splendour of Bory-Vár or Taródi-Vár has been built by an individual in Britain since the war. However, just south of Kiparissia in Greece, on the west coast of the Peloponnese, north of an Eiffel Tower, stands another new castle - but that's another story...

Grateful thanks to Gabor Ronay of *The Times* for his invaluable help with the Hungarian language.

BOOK REVIEWS

Hundy Mundy

Tim Buxbaum, *Scottish Garden Buildings - From Food to Folly*. Mainstream Publishing Company, Edinburgh, 1989. £14.95. 192pp. ISBN 1 85158 113 8

Published in association with the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, this is a very welcome book on the relatively uncharted field of Scottish garden buildings and follies. Illustrated throughout with good quality black and white photographs, plus a short colour photo section in the middle, the book gives a rich taste of what lies north of the border for the folly lover.

Early chapters take the reader through some relevant Scottish garden history, and consider the various components of the estate garden - walled garden, parterres, gazebos, orangeries, banqueting houses etc... A section on the varied and often eccentric edifices erected as park gates and lodges provides a perfect Scottish complement to Mowl and Earnshaw's England and Wales based *Trumpet at a Distant Gate* (Waterstones, 1985). Estate buildings concerned with food production are then documented, with many dovecotes (doocots to the Scots...), dairies, game larders and ice houses built with more than function in mind - see the ice house at Gosford, Lothian, designed to resemble a lakeside grotto. The remainder of the book then deals with all those difficult to classify, irritatingly undocumented, obscure and often forgotten buildings beloved of the folly enthusiast. From the imposing Pitfour bath-house, modelled on a Temple to Theseus, to the zany and better known Lanrick Tree, the author provides many temptations for the armchair folly-fan to leap from his comfortable seat and tak' the high road north. A selective but nevertheless lengthy gazetteer rounds off the book, complete with grid references. An indication of which sites are accessible to the public on a regular basis would perhaps have been useful here.

The book includes descriptions and illustrations of many follies which have previously eluded the documentation that they deserve, including several which slipped through the Headley/Meulenkamp Follies (1st edition!) net, such as the delightfully named Hundy Mundy near Mellerstain in Borders. In a pioneer study such as this there are bound to be some omissions (I noted a personal favourite of mine, Lady Jean's Well at Blair Castle, failed to feature in the gazetteer, for instance), but the book will, no doubt, stimulate further research and interest, and hopefully help to ensure a more certain future for some of the buildings described.

Overall verdict: a very worthwhile addition to the folly enthusiast's library, attractively produced (even though on my flysheet cover the title was slightly too long for the width of the book!), and very good value given its fairly limited potential market. It was a double pleasure to note that the book was produced totally within the UK (a rare thing these days)

and that it had found its way into a quite small bookshop in the south of England, suggesting it had a good distributor. May it sell many copies. L. H.

Stoic Cornucopia

Michael Bevington, *Templa Quam Dilecta: Stowe Capability Books, Stowe 1989-1990, numbers I - VI*. £2.00 (£2.50 from no. V onwards) Each issue 19pp.

G.B. Clarke, *Descriptions of Lord Cobham's Gardens at Stowe (1700-1750)*. Buckinghamshire Record Society. Aylesbury 1990. £5.00 (hardback £12.50). 188 pp. ISBN 0 90198 26 9.

C.N. Gowing and G.B. Clarke, *Views of Stowe: Drawings of Stowe by John Claude Nattes in the Buckinghamshire County Museum. Buckinghamshire County Museum and Stowe School 1983*. £2.50 (hardback £5.00). 14 pp. and 51 plates. ISBN 0 86059 282 0.

Distrust the reviewer who has no criticisms to make about a book, for he has either not read it, or knows nothing about the subject. In the case of *Templa Quam Dilecta* and the other publications under review I beg the reader's forgiveness - I have nearly no criticisms to make. And yet I have read them, and yet I claim to at least know a bit about the subject. But these books are near perfect. The only thing one seems to be able to do is record their existence and exhort readers to get hold of them as soon as possible - finances need not get in the way as they are inexpensive by any standards.

The survival of the buildings at Stowe is nothing short of a miracle. When in 1889 the third and last Duke, Richard Plantagenet Campbell Temple-Nugent-Brydges-Chandos-Grenville, died, his daughter took over. It all seemed to end in the disastrous sale of 1921. In 1923 the school was established at Stowe. Total annihilation by school authorities and pupils of both the garden and its buildings was to be expected. Instead the school cared quite well for its amazing site and has been lucky in having on its staff several people who were as fascinated by the buildings as some of the Old Stoics were: Clough Williams-Ellis, Laurence Whistler, Michael Gibbon, George Clarke and Michael Bevington. Mishaps occurred (for example the Chackmore Fountain, demolished in the 1950s - scheduled for reconstruction), but on the whole Stowe School has been beneficial to the garden and its buildings. The National Trust have now taken over the park and Follies (the Gothic Temple has been leased by the Landmark Trust since 1970) and the future is as secure as ever. But secure only when enough financial help can be found to restore the magnificent garden buildings,

because by now many of the Stowe temples are in need of extensive restoration. This became evident to many of us who attended this year's Folly Fellowship Garden Party.

As at Painshill the preparations for extensive restoration go hand in hand with several new publications. Of this *Templa Quam Dilecta* is the most unusual: a series of monographs on all the buildings at Stowe, with sometimes more than one building treated in a single issue. It can best be compared to Rosemary Bowden-Smith's *English Garden Features* booklets. To how many issues *Templa Quam Dilecta* will eventually run, I do not know - there must be material for at least twenty or more. The production is attractive (especially the single colour frontispieces) and the design by J.E. Ewens deserves special mention. The items treated until now are the gates and avenues, the Boycott Pavilions, the George I statue, the Queen's Temple, and the Gothic Temple. By the time this review is published, no. VII, the Temple of Friendship, will be on sale. Its author is best at presenting the vicissitudes of each particular building at Stowe, and accompanies it by a running comment on how contemporaries and the visitors and critics in each century noticed (or failed to notice) a specific building and speculated on its architectural and picturesque value. He does not concern himself overmuch with the building details, as most of them are known from other publications. Bevington also at times tends to speculate on provenances and influences. His comparison of the Gothic Temple at Stowe with Thomas Tresham's Triangular Lodge is interesting enough, but I have to disagree with his inclusion of Kent's Rousham Eyecatcher under the Gothic Survival. It may not be a clearcut Gothic building, leaning as it does towards the Primitive Style, but Survival it is certainly not.

Templa Quam Dilecta is a major feat in the historiography of the British garden building, and as such it deserves all the attention it can get.

The presentation of *Descriptions of... Stowe*, publication number 26 in the Buckinghamshire Record Society series, is perhaps a bit tamer, but also required reading. Apart from some better known sources this anthology on the Stowe gardens and buildings contains a string of less familiar writings, such as the journal kept by Jeremiah Milles in 1735 and the anonymous description of 1738. The editor has chosen to leave out the obvious guide books and I can follow his reasoning, but it would have been nice to have the whole collection. I must take him to task though for changing "ye" into "the" and expanding common abbreviations. These changes are, of course, trivial but that is exactly the reason why the editor should not have bothered with changing them in the first place.

The illustrations from contemporary sources, such as the ten plates from Seeley's 1750 Views are a delight. I expect we will see another volume giving the descriptions of Stowe from 1750 onwards, although the editor doesn't promise to do so. I sincerely hope he will find the time for it.

Published seven years ago, but still available at the Stowe bookshop, are the fifty-one drawings by John Claude Nattes of the

buildings at Stowe, a snip at £2.50. Nattes worked diligently at the views between 1805 and 1809, producing 105 wash drawings in all - regrettably only half the number is reproduced here, but the catalogue lists all of them. Michael Bevington also makes judicious use of Nattes' drawings in his series.

The drawings were supposed to be engraved and printed under the patronage of George, Marquess of Buckingham, but in the end the project was aborted for unknown reasons. Disaster hit the artist when he was expelled from the Water Colour Society (of which he was a founder-member) in 1807 for presenting someone else's work under his own name. The poor man is not even mentioned in the standard *Century of British Painters of 1866*. Although of course most of the buildings at Stowe were finished much earlier, Nattes' views are the first pictorial records of several of the newer ones, whilst others present buildings like the Bourbon Tower (originally Keeper's Lodge) before they were altered. In this way the Views contain unique material.

I also recommend the classic *Guide to Stowe gardens* by Laurence Whistler, Michael Gibbon and George Clarke, first published in 1956 and still in print. All these publications together constitute the survival kit for the Stowe visitor. The only thing left to do is the restoration of these beautiful and edifying buildings. Leave some of the ivy on.

W.G.J.M.M.

The Needle's Eye and Other Stories

Stephen Hird, *The Wentworth Monuments. Metropolitan Borough of Rotherham, second rev. 1989. £1.00. 18pp. ISBN 0 903666 20 0*

Stephen Hird has done his homework on the Wentworth Woodhouse follies, his research revealing, original and refreshing. As a prelude to the main work it is worth knowing how the two Wentworth Estates came into being.

The 2nd Earl of Stafford died in 1695, without issue, and made Thomas Watson his heir, to whom passed the Woodhouse Estate together with lands in Ireland. Thomas Wentworth who was actually a blood relation of the first Earl only received the barony of Raby. If anything it was this sense of injustice that started Lord Raby's building escapades at Wentworth Castle, which he purposely acquired in 1708, only six miles from Wentworth Woodhouse.

Most of the major monuments at Wentworth Woodhouse were ostensibly erected for political reasons, and the booklet goes on to describe them in detail, with grid references, their present condition etc. New light is shed on the long held belief that the Needle's Eye was built in 1780, as a result of a wager - 'There is some evidence to suggest that the monument had been built before 1746, since it is represented, in pictorial form, on a plan of the Estate of the Earl of Malton (1746 being the year the Earl became the 1st Marquis of Rockingham). Mr. Hird goes on further to suggest that it may be as early as 1722-23.

Just before his death in 1979, Earl Fitzwilliam donated the monuments (excluding Keppel's Column which was bought separately by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council), to a Wentworth Monuments Society, formed in 1976, to try and save these 'endangered species'. The booklet really proves invaluable to those who take the trouble to obtain written permission to see the monuments - all are on private land except Keppel's Column.

Follies & Grottoes, as expected, is listed as one of the source books. Not consulted, apparently, was M. J. Charlesworth's article on *The Wentworths* (*Garden History*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1986, pp. 120-137) which gives a good account of the underlying socio-political rivalry but adds very little on these monuments.

The small booklet is a must for any folly enthusiast, certainly the most comprehensive coverage yet of the Woodhouse monuments. Can we expect a companion work on those follies at Wentworth Castle? It goes beyond the coverage of existing works, and includes descriptions of a Doric lodge, Doric Temple and Ionic Temple but fails to detail 'The Round House' - a castellated ex-windmill, the type always loved by the follyphile - although one suspects this is one of the twenty one monuments that the Society has listed on the estate.

Any criticisms? I have to say I found very little to fault, however hard I tried. Perhaps some photographs would have been nice instead of all the drawings, and the description of the house/houses I initially found very confusing. The price of £1.00 (plus 20p post and packing) is reason enough to buy a copy. There are far too few books on follies, and monographs like this are a welcome addition to anyone's bookshelf.

Copies may be obtained from: *Central Library and Arts Centre, Walker Place, Rotherham, South Yorkshire S65 1JH*. Cheques made payable to Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council. M.G.C.

Caged Plants

May Woods and Arete Swartz Warren. *Glass Houses: A History of Greenhouses, Orangeries and Conservatories*. Aurum Press, London 1990. £14.95 . 216pp. ISBN 1 85410 113 7

This is the paperback edition of *Glass Houses*, which first appeared in 1988. It was actually one of four major books on glasshouses published in the seventies and eighties. The present title will no doubt see us through to the twenty-first century. Like *Follies* and other garden buildings, the glasshouse and its often very precious contents could ruin the owner. Apparently people were aware of it as early as the sixteenth century. When confirming an order for some "lymmon (and) myrte trees" in 1561, Thomas Windebank wrote from Paris to his employer Sir William Cecil: "You will not thinke your monny lost if it doo not prosperre, it shall take awaye your desire of loesing any more money in like sorte." Clever man.

But fashion never stopped anyone from throwing away a fortune. At first the exotic plants and trees from all continents were kept in orangeries that only had to perform the technical function of keeping the flora alive and comfortably well. Very soon this architectural machine was also expected to be a thing of beauty, so the classical orders were unleashed upon it. Unlike other garden buildings though, the orangery and the glasshouse remained a functional edifice. It usually managed to reconcile these two aspects in an elegant and satisfactory way.

By the eighteenth century some of these buildings wandered off into the realm of mere decoration. But what splendid folly ensued: The Dunmore Pineapple is one of the best known examples, and, although taste through the centuries might have deplored these excesses the authors of *Glass Houses* don't see any harm in it - they even show a slight preference for the decorative orangery, and who will blame them.

The book goes from orangery to glass house to conservatory, in a chronological order, usually presenting written vignettes of the buildings, commenting on innovations both technical and aesthetic. The emphasis is on British buildings, followed (at the end of each chapter) by a liberal dose of American examples. The drawback is that not much room is left for the Continental developments which have always been, the authors acknowledge, of major importance. One understands that the American market demands the insertion of US buildings, but some of them are rather late, quite common and not always very spectacular. Although there are many references to Continental greenhouse technology and quite a few are paid attention, the book is tilted towards the Anglo-Saxon part of the world. Nevertheless, I would not have wanted to miss the greenhouse at Lemon Hill (!) near Philadelphia, where around 1800 Henry Pratt built himself a greenhouse, around a nucleus provided by the original villa, that was larger than the nearby new mansion. And, of course, there is Mr Merritt's Folly, a gigantic conservatory built in the 1870s on the Hudson River.

The history of the greenhouse (by whatever name it went) as presented in this book shows how each period reached its own pinnacle of achievement as a garden building. There are splendid examples of Renaissance, Neo-Classical, exotic and gothic, Victorian and Edwardian buildings, and a bevy of Modernist and Postmodern creations. My personal favourites are the glasshouses erected by the firm of W. & D. Bailey in the 1820s. The Palm House at Bieton, looking like three huge blobs from outer space, still survives.

The conservatory craze of today, with its own horror stories akin to the dark deeds of double-glazing firms, is not as disastrous as many would have us believe. Most older houses deserve a conservatory, and as for the sometimes ludicrous examples put up in recent years near new houses, it would be good to reflect that everyone is entitled to his or her own piece of folly. As long as it doesn't frighten the neighbours.

Glass Houses might put you onto an idea or two, but it is first and foremost a book for those interested in architecture in general and

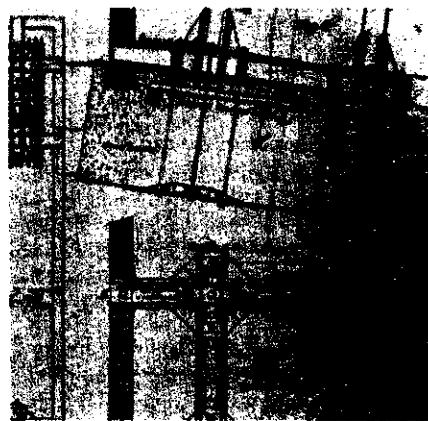
garden buildings especially. The illustrations are well-chosen and some of the photographs are so beautiful (with a keen eye for detail) that it would be a pity to let this book dampen and curl on the cast-iron table in your conservatory.

There are a few examples that I expected to find in the present publication, but missed: the Palm House on the Pfaueninsel, Berlin (demolished, but Karl Blechen did quite a good painting of it) and the greenhouse at Ename, Belgium, which is well-documented. This brings me to the bibliography: excellent, with about two hundred titles. I did miss two titles though. First William Wright's *Grotesque Architecture* (1760 and quite a few later editions), in which the elusive designer presents a horrid little "green-house of the grotesque kind, faced with flints and irregular stones". Second, the anonymous *Decorations for Parks and Gardens* (circa 1790) which has some rather tame designs for two greenhouses, a conservatory, and a hot house. But then I am fully aware that it is quite impossible to include each and every mildly interesting example of garden structures like greenhouses and conservatories in a book, however all-encompassing it tries to be. And what was that about people living in glass houses?

W.G.J.M.M.

Barmy Blackpool

Bill Curtis. Blackpool Tower.
Terence Dalton, Lavenham 1988.
£6.95. 134pp.
ISBN 0 86138 068 1



Not everyone is prepared to regard Blackpool Tower (built by Maxwell & Tuke between 1891 and 1894) as a Folly. The argument against it mainly relies on the fact that the tower was meant as a commercial enterprise from the start. The case for Blackpool's counterpart of the Eiffel Tower being a Folly relies on the idea that anything over 500 feet tall and begun in the nineteenth century might easily fall within our remit. Even more so if it tries to get away with plagiarising an older building. The clincher is this: despite dressing up the Blackpool Tower with ballrooms, playgrounds and boutiques it still is just a lookout tower, the kind of building we immediately pronounce to be a Folly if some landowner has built it. So even if an admission is charged, and more people get to see it than just a

landowner, guests and the odd gamekeeper, the Tower at Blackpool is a Folly, nothing more, nothing less.

Blackpool Tower is perhaps not the world's greatest book. The reproduction of the photographs is well below the not very exacting standards of The Kiev Tractor and Combine Publishing House. And its author appears not to be overly interested in Follies. It deals mainly with the Tower's various forms of entertainment through the years. But she does mention other British Eiffel-clones.

The list is an interesting one: Wembley Tower, started in 1889 and taken down in 1907, was never finished and turned out to be commercially unviable, although of course many people would have wanted to pay good money for one of the more idiotic projects proposed, in which a vegetarian colony, consisting of entire families, would grow their own vegetables on a tower. It is not known whether the luckless veggies would be allowed to roam freely, or were to be caged. And then there was the range of towers proposed by a body called The Standard Contract and Debenture Society (later involved in the Blackpool project as well), doubling as communication beacons and pleasure palaces. One was on the Isle of Man (abandoned with only the foundations laid in 1890) and another of their projects appears to have been at Morecambe, where the tower was indeed completed but was pronounced a dangerous structure and had to be taken down again. [Has anyone seen an illustration of this? - Ed Later came the imitation's imitation: the tower at New Brighton, Liverpool, built between 1897 and 1898, also by Maxwell and Tuke. Sadly Blackpool's main competitor was demolished in 1919.

Blackpool Tower doesn't mention Continental towers, but there is at least one still in existence. I have always treasured a pre-war postcard showing an Eiffel Tower in Prague. Naturally, I expected the ugly duckling to have long since bitten the dust, but our esteemed editor informs me that the Prague tower is as alive as a Pilsner.

Blackpool Tower is first of all a Tower Fancier's book (I am led to believe many of our readers are of that genre) and it will also console those who aren't able to forget their first Meccano set. Yet I am convinced there still is an interesting article (or book) to write about Europe's Eiffel Towers. Authors could take their cue from the articles F.I. Jenkins published in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* and the *RIBA Journal* in 1957 and 1958. Any takers?

W.G.J.M

Driving toward Height

Edward Heinle and Fritz Leonhardt, Towers: A Historic Survey. Butterworth Architecture, 1989. 343pp, Hardback, £49.50.
ISBN 0 408 04306 7

With the wealth of folly towers adorning the European countryside, and a few others further afield, the publication of a book on towers should be a natural attraction to all

folly hunters. But if you buy the book in anticipation of reading about the Dutch Van Nellesteyn Mausoleum at Leersum, the Apocalypse Tower in Eben-Ezer, Belgium, May's Folly at Hadlow, Kent or Turin's Mole Antonelliana, you will be disappointed. True follies are conspicuous by their absence, although you will find information on the Taj Mahal, Sagrada Familia and Watts Tower in Los Angeles.

Few people could deny a fascination with towers and tall structures. Every year thousands of us take the lift to the top of the Empire State Building, or climb church towers and mountains. But even when standing atop St. Paul's Cathedral or an Egyptian pyramid, it is easy to forget that tall structures have been built in every quarter of the world since the beginning of civilisation. Only in the last fifty years have our eyes been opened to the structural achievements of ancient India, Burma and Nepal. Typical are the 10th century Chinese pagodas which were being built to a height of 492 feet; an achievement worth recalling next time you admire Salisbury Cathedral's Gothic spire which only rises 404!

From the Tower of Babel whose peak, according to the Bible, rose to heaven, to Toronto's CN Tower, mankind has striven to reach new heights. But what was the original motivation? Height is associated with spirituality. We look up to God, and relate paradise to heaven. Modern architects, engineers and patrons consider height differently and regard ever taller buildings as a challenge and defiance of gravity.

Most architectural books afford a fleeting reference to towers and Heinle and Leonhardt's aim was to fill that gap. They have succeeded and embraced many of the world's tall structures. But, say the authors, the examples cited have been restricted by the availability of photographs. I found this an enormous disappointment, if not a source of frustration, and is why I searched in vain for the amazing Persian pigeon towers near Cairo; Peterson's Folly in Hampshire; the Wainhouse Tower in West Yorkshire; and the Lloyd's building and National Westminster Tower in the City of London. Despite these and a few other notable omissions, *Towers* serves as a comprehensive guide to worldwide tall architecture, covering everything from a proposal to stabilise the leaning Tower of Pisa, Alexandre-Gustav Eiffel's 948-foot high skeleton Tower in Paris and its Tokyo copy which rises a further 154 feet. It also covers Eric Mendelsohn's Einstein Tower in Potsdam, and the Alexandria Lighthouse (305-280 B.C.) where combustible petrol and resin-soaked wood was used as fuel.

The authors have tried to express the particular charm of towers in architecture. They include everything from temples to cathedrals, castles, lighthouses, windmills, and water, wireless and television towers. Someday, they say, 'the highest towers will be built in the desert for thermal wind-driven power stations, which require a height of 3,280 feet (1,000 metres).'

I must own up to being confused by the 205 footnotes, each of which composed a bibliography rather than explanatory notes. A typical example was page 9 where one paragraph read: 'Finally, the book discusses

the increase in the number of people, nowadays, who experience towers'. Simple enough until you note the reference to footnotes 22-24 and 75-180. But why are 109 references necessary to such a simple and uncluttered statement? The answer was not clear and in the end I found them a nuisance and chose to ignore them.

Towers includes 900 illustrations, 734 of which are in 'color', and is accompanied by a straightforward and easy to follow text. Because it is primarily a photographic survey, I must confess to an occasional grimace at the dozen or so unfocussed photographs which leapt from the pages. The worst offenders were the Fisher Towers in Arizona's monument valley, the Minaret at Aleppo, Feihong or flying rainbow Pagoda at Hongdong, and the Church of Santissima Annunziata, Genoa. There were a few grainy photographs, including those of Lincoln Cathedral and the Chateau de Sully, and an inexplicable duplicate of the Nuraghe, Sardinia. Surely better illustrations of these structures could have been found from somewhere? Generally, however, the photographic quality is among the best that I have seen for some time.

I was disappointed not to find references to folly towers but, in the end, it did not matter. *Towers* is a book on world architecture and once I began to read it I found it difficult to put down. With the exception of the occasional illustration, I thoroughly enjoyed every page and have little doubt that it will inform, inspire and amaze every professional and layman.

A.J.A.P.

BOOKS RECEIVED

P.M. Sutton-Gould, *Decorative Leadwork*. Shire Publications, Princes Risborough 1990. £1.95. 32pp. ISBN 0 7478 0082 0

Jacqueline Fearn, *Cast Iron*. Shire Publications, Princes Risborough 1990. £1.95. 32pp. ISBN 0 7478 0083 9

Paul Holberton, *Palladio's Villas: Life in the Renaissance Countryside*. John Murray, London 1990. £16.95. 256pp. ISBN 0 7195 4782 2

Clive Aslet, *The American Country House*.

ADIRONDACK FURNITURE FROM
THE AMERICAN COUNTRY HOUSE



Yale University Press, New Haven & London 1990. £22.50. 302pp. ISBN 0 300 04757 6

Mark Alan Hewitt, *The Architect and the American Country House*. Yale University Press, New Haven & London 1990. £35.00. 312pp. ISBN 0 300 04740 1

M.J. Vroom and J.H.A. Meeus (ed.), *Learning from Rotterdam: Investigating the Process of Urban Park Design*. Mansell, London 1990. L. 25.00. 173 pp. ISBN 0 7201 1895 6.

Concerns itself with the 1985 Design Seminar for a park near the Boymans Museum, Rotterdam. Nothing came of it, as the requirements were changed later on. Not a Folly or garden building (let alone grotto) in sight. For the specialist.

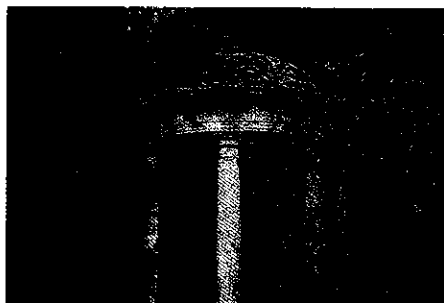
Books We Are Unlikely To Receive Review Copies Of, Number 1:

Diana Ketcham, *Le Désert de Retz: A Late-Eighteenth Century French Folly Garden*. Arion Press, San Francisco 1990. \$375.

LETTERS

After the highly enjoyable Garden Party at Stowe I have been encouraged to send you two pictures of relatively little known follies and a brief note about a non-existent one.

The wooden one is an amusing 'belvedere' in the wild part of the gardens of Muncaster

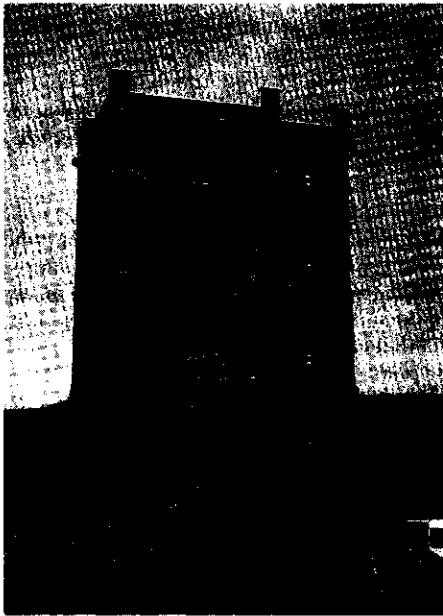


TEMPLE OF HEALTH, BARRINGTON PARK, GREAT BARRINGTON, BURFORD, OXFORDSHIRE

Castle in Cumbria overlooking a wide valley. It is octagonal with roughly formed rustic bracing and a shingle roof. There is a built-in bench and a very rustic table for the comfort

WOODEN 'BELVEDERE' MUNCASTER CASTLE, CUMBRIA





WINTER'S TOWER, COMBE FLOREY, SOMERSET.

of its occupants. Sadly, as you can see, it is in need of care and protection.

The classical stone Temple of Health is also suffering a severe illness, hopefully not terminal, with a decayed entablature and a sapling growing out of the stone roof. It is in the garden of the privately owned Barrington Park in Gloucestershire.

The no-longer-in-existence one was Hockley Abbey built by Richard Ford, a Birmingham brassfounder, about 1799 from industrial slag. Robert Dent, in his "Old and New Birmingham" published in 1878 describes a walk to the north of the town through what are now decayed suburbs. Beyond Aston, in a valley on the left, he says "we notice a curious and picturesque ruin of some apparently very ancient monastic building; but old as it seems, it was not in existence when Matthew Boulton founded his great manufactory at Soho in Handsworth".

The Rev. Charles Tomkins, Rector of Handsworth, has written "Overlooking Boulton's pool there was about 1799, a piece of boggy and waste land which was let to Richard Ford who conceived the notion of transforming the desert into an attraction for visitors. Ford was a manufacturer who was distressed by his men's habits of wasteful dissipation and determined to employ their spare time profitably. He set aside 12 or 15 shillings a week and, when trade was slack, sent his horse and cart to Aston Furnace for loads of slag. When he had collected enough of this unattractive material, he began to fashion a ruined abbey. To emphasise the deception the date 1473 was picked out in small pebble stones set in cement in front of the building. In a very few years, by careful training, nearly the whole of the building was overgrown with ivy and a sketch in Bisset's Directory shows an agreeably picturesque ruin which deceived many who did not penetrate to the slag of which it was composed".

Basil Harley
"Carpenters"
Little Barrington
Burford
Oxfordshire OX8 4T

Recently I had a visit from one of The Folly Fellowship members, who showed considerable interest in my tower conversion. (Winters Tower, Combe Florey, near Taunton.)

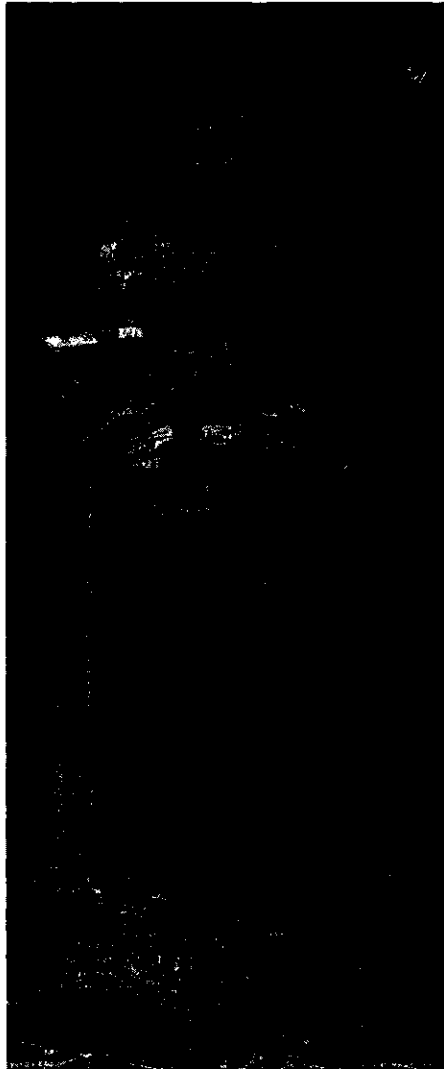
I have enclosed some photographs for your records; these may be of use to you. The project is almost complete, and I would welcome any of your members to come and visit this renovation.

Should any of your members be looking to acquire such a property perhaps you would be kind enough to put them in touch with me.

Desmond Baker
"Gleneagles"
45 Golf Links Road
Berrow
Burnham-on-Sea
Somerset TA8 2PP
Tel: 0278 783430.

We are antique dealers (please don't hold it against us!) in Chelsea who specialise in garden statuary and English chimneypieces, and we have recently acquired a 'Gothick' well-head carved as a folly. It was obtained in Scotland, although we do not believe it to be Scottish as it carries the arms of 'The White Bakers Company of London'. It is 148" high (the base is obviously missing), has a maximum

GOTHIC WELL-HEAD WITH THE ARMS OF THE WHITE BAKERS' COMPANY OF LONDON.



width of 57" and a maximum depth of 72".

Do you think any of your members may be able to shed any light on where it originated from, who commissioned it and why?

Sarah L. Adam
Miles D'Agar / Nicholas Gifford-Mead
533 King's Road
London SW10 0TZ

Laundry Farm Folly in Cambridge was there until 1960 or so. We used to play in it as children. I do have a not very good photo of it. It was basically like so.



Laundry Farm is on Barton Road in West Cambridge and is now taken over by the University (Breeding Sheep). They were the destroyers of the tower. It used to belong to a Farmer Loveday and his son, with a mad Professor Cattermole and daughter (v. eccentric) who lived in a rough cottage behind the farmyard. We grew up with this and accepted the whole scene as everyday! Loveday would bring our milk in churns and ladle it out in our yard into jugs - this was the 1940s during the war.

I folly hunted like mad from the age of 18 until 24 when I had to give up rushing around the countryside - taking greyish photos - because the weather was always dreadful when you got there!

My now grown-up daughter is addicted and when doing some research for her, I re-read your book and put pen to paper. The Barbara Jones drawing of Laundry Farm is pretty accurate.

Good folly hunting - and may their preservation continue!

Rosemary Myers
2 Babraham Road
Cambridge CB2 2RA

I am writing to thank you for being awarded the second prize in the Folly Fellowship / Lawson-Price Prize for Measured Drawings and also to offer my apologies for not contacting you earlier.

I thoroughly enjoyed participating in the competition and feel that it was one of the most useful exercises that I completed during my time at college. For this reason I believe it is regrettable that this type of work is not a mandatory part of the training at more schools of architecture. I consider it a highly

instructive form of education that can provide a good source of inspiration and understanding for students embarking on design projects of their own and therefore applaud your efforts to promote the practise of measured drawing, and the study of follies in particular which I consider to be a very important, but much over-looked part of our heritage.

Once again may I express my thanks for being awarded my prize and hope you will enjoy success both in future competitions and with the valuable conservation work undertaken by the Fellowship.

*Harvey L. Gould
The Poplars
Astley
Nr. Shrewsbury
Shropshire SY4 4BP.*

I have been a member of the Folly Fellowship for some time and it was with great delight that I read of the success of the first Lawson-Price competition!

I have a special request: please consider opening the competition to students from outside Britain and Ireland* - or perhaps have a separate section for international entries. We should encourage the appreciation of follies everywhere, and "raising the consciousness" of students - in all countries - is an excellent long term investment!
*This restriction is noted in the competition announcement: page 1, issue 3.

*Seth Joseph Weine
224 Thompson Street #8
New York, N.Y. 10012
U.S.A.*

Gwyn Headley is quoted in the summer newsletter as saying that 'a Folly could be described as a building serving no useful purpose, save that it attracts and appeals to the eye' and the all-embracing definition that 'you'll know one when you see one'.

I am enclosing some details of the Sessions House in Peterborough which definitely attracts and appeals to the eye, is definitely recognisable as a folly by me, but was and still is useful.

It was built in 1842 for the liberty of Peterborough Magistrates, Architect W.J. Donthorne. I enclose a copy of an 1842 engraving with Peterborough Cathedral in the distance.

If you agree with me would you care to include it in the next newsletter and a short description?

*Joseph Robotham ARIBA
Mathew Robotham Associates
42 Cowgate
Peterborough PE1 1NA*

(Gwyn Headley writes: Donthorne makes an appearance in *Follies* as architect of the Leicester Monument (p.357), and as his Sessions House is as gaol-like as Lord Cobham's gaol in Buckingham, and moreover has now been converted into a pub-restaurant, it seems to be a strong candidate. But I haven't seen it!)

F O R S A L E

PIETER & RITA VAN DEN BOOGAART



INSIDE A LA RONDE.

❖ Sadly A La Ronde, owned by one of our Fellows, Ursula Tudor Perkins, has had to be put on the market. Most readers will probably be aware of the unique character of this house, fashioned by the two Misses Parminter at the end of the 18th century, and it would be tragic to see it, or the adjoining land, misused. The alarm bells have been sounded and various schemes are being investigated to keep the house in family hands. The asking price by Jackson-Stops & Staff is in the region of £750,000 - not a vast sum of money for such a jewel.

The National Trust have decided in principle to buy it, provided they can raise the money. The Trust wants to raise a further £1 million over and above the selling price towards renovation and maintenance.

❖ Hamptons have Waynflete Tower on the market again. They are also agents for two other properties. Rous Lench in Worcestershire is a grade II* manor house, long famous for its topiary laid out between 1876 and 1916 by the Rev. W.K.W. Chafy. At the southern extremity of the gardens, and included in the sale, is a sixty-foot Italianate red-brick tower. The other residence is Gothic Revivalist Sanderson Miller's thatched cottage at Edgehill, Warwickshire, built in 1743-44. Unfortunately the thatch has been replaced, and the cottage, known as Egge Cottage, recently extended. The seller is none other than Edward Woodward and the asking price is £325,000.

❖ Hamptons have also been responsible for the recent auction (19th July) of a former Admiralty semaphore tower near Guildford, offering sweeping panoramic views of the North Downs.

❖ If future endeavours to restore/rebuild Charles Hamilton's Temple of Bacchus

materialise, potential purchasers of Painshill House (although through Knight Frank & Rutley - o.i.r.o. £575,000) might be tempted to return four columns taken from the principal portico. These were removed in 1925 to decorate the east front of the house, an act which almost certainly accelerated the collapse of the temple.

❖ Braxton have the freehold of Medmenham Abbey near Marlow, Bucks on offer. Best remembered for the foundation of Hell Fire Club, Sir Francis Dashwood is credited with the ruined Abbey tower, c.1755, which adjoins one end of the house.

❖ The Council of the Borough of Harrogate are inviting proposals for the development of the outbuildings and adjoining land at Harlow Observatory Tower. The tower itself, built by John Thompson in 1829 is not included in the sale (or long lease).

❖ There is a beautifully restored flint folly facade attached to the end of an agreeable house in Whitchurch, Oxfordshire.

The Baulk is described as a 'an unusual flint and brick built Folly' and originally formed the starting point of a picturesque walk through the Hardwick Estate, taking in three other follies before ending up at Straw Hall. It was built around the turn of the century by Sir Charles Rose although only the two pyramid capped corner towers hint at folly. Savills were originally seeking o.i.r.o. £425,000, but the sale is now being handled by Lane Fox.

❖ The Hunting Tower in Woodchester Park was the only feature of William Leigh's building efforts to reach fruition (his huge mansion still remains unfinished), and today offers in the region of £295,000 are invited from Hansons.

❖ Readers might also like to know that William Mackworth-Dolben's Finedon Hall, a Gothic-cum-Tudor fantasy, has been restored and converted into seven apartments, with prices from £175,000. Lowery's in Northampton are handling the business.

❖ Near Caernarfon in Gwynedd yet another golf course is planned; the handicap here is the absurdly overelaborate Fort Belan, built between 1773 and 1776 at a cost of £30,000 by Sir Thomas Wynn as a defence against the expected French invasion. Strutt & Parker are selling the fort and 39 acres for £750,000 as being surplus to requirements for the £30 million golf development. Arfon Council is fighting the proposal, which if it goes through would mean the bastions stoutly raised two hundred years ago against the filthy garlic eating, wine swilling foreigners would silently capitulate to hordes of little yellow five iron swinging foreigners.

❖ A Unique and intriguing folly tower in a fabulous setting. Just restored to provide a lavishly appointed residence on five floors plus roof patio with breathtaking panoramic views. The tower, somewhat changed since it was described in *Follies* is Winter's Folly in Combe Florey for sale through Cornerstone at £345,000.

'The tenants seemed ignorant for what purpose this unseemly tower was erected,' wrote a Mr Jeboult in 1873 about Winter's Folly. Now it has been converted into a five storey house by Des Baker, a speculative builder from Burnham-on-Sea, (see letter). When we last visited the tower in 1981, it was roofless, floorless and very nearly beyond hope, so Mr Baker is to be congratulated on rescuing it. Mr Jeboult's curiosity can now be satisfied by the explanation that the tower was built by John Winter in 1790 in order to spy on his neighbours, the Lethbridges in Sandhill Park, with whom he had legal battles costing £20,000 in lawyers' fees. It's still bloody ugly, though.

❖ The van den Boogaarts (from the Netherlands, not from Limburg), tell us that Steeple Lodge at Wentworth is for sale at £120,000. Telephone Halifax Property Services on Barnsley 2400900 for further details.

❖ A Dorset antiques emporium called Talisman (decorative dealers, *please!*) is selling its entire stock over the next five months. Among the treasures is a magnificent Coade Stone lion and eagle, made to commemorate the Battle of Waterloo, and illustrated here. Originally sold for 45 guineas, Talisman want £30,000 for the piece. Contact them at The Old Brewery, Wyke, Gillingham, Dorset SP8 4NW. Telephone 0747 824423.



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BACK ISSUES

Back issues of FOLLIES are available in very limited numbers from The Secretary, The Folly Fellowship, Woodstock House, Winterhill Lane, Burpham, Surrey, GU4 7JX for £2 each plus 40p post and packing.

MEMBERSHIP

To: The Folly Fellowship
21 Beacon Road
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I wish to become a member of the Folly Fellowship. I enclose my annual subscription of £10 (\$25 overseas) which in addition to benefits far too numerous to list here, will entitle me to four editions of FOLLIES, the newsletter of the Folly Fellowship.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

INFORMATION WANTED

For a future issue of FOLLIES Wim Meulenkamp is preparing an article on the use and misuse of Follies and garden buildings in fiction: novels, stories, poetry. Some examples: Agatha Christie's *Dead Man's Folly*; the Folly in John Braine's *Room at the Top*; Val Mulherns, *The Summerhouse*; Roger Moss, *The Game of the Pink Pagoda*; Claud Cockburn, *Ballantyne's Folly*; P.D. James, *The Black Tower*; Louis Bromfield, *McLeod's Folly*; Nina Bowden, *The Ice House*. The buildings described can either be totally fictional or based on existing structures. I am looking for further examples, not necessarily only in twentieth-century literature.

The address to write to is:
Wim Meulenkamp
Troelstralaan 80
3515 CL Utrecht
Netherlands.

Peter Heaton, Rathmell, Carr Lane, Sutton-on-the-Forest, York is interested in pyramidal monuments and follies in the British Isles. Any information gratefully received.

FOLLIES, the magazine of the Folly Fellowship, is published four times a year from 22 Mount View Road, London N4 4HX and Woodstock House, Winterhill Way, Burpham, Surrey GU4 7JX. The issue was edited by Gwyn Headley and produced by Lampada Limited, 071 229 6811.

The Folly Fellowship

AIMS

to preserve and promote the enjoyment and awareness of Follies, grottoes and garden buildings and

FIGHTS

to protect lonely and unloved buildings of little purpose from being rationalised or destroyed and

ADVISES

consultative bodies on the importance of Follies in a once and future context, members on how to find help with their Folly problems and

PHOTOGRAPHS

Follies throughout Britain and overseas to provide an archive and picture library operating from London and

PUBLISHES

a quarterly magazine, postcards, calendars, monographs, and

LECTURES

on Follies for private, institutional and commercial groups such as Rotary International and Trust House Forte and

AWARDS

the annual Folly Fellowship Lawson-Price Prize of 2,000 guineas for the best measured drawing of a Folly, grotto or garden building by a student, with runner-up prizes of 750gns and 250gns, and

LOCATES

unusual, intriguing or simply bizarre structures and sites for film; TV and advertising work and

COLLECTS

books, pamphlets, letters, drawings, pictures, press cuttings and all printed material on Follies to build a reference library encompassing the subject and

GATHERS

together for an informal garden party every year and

PROVIDES

Pimms, tea and sympathy and

NEEDS

more members! Join us now purely for your own interest and enjoyment, and you'll help to protect the most intriguing parts of Britain's greatest offering to the artistic world - the improvement of landscape.

A landscape without folly is like a day without sunshine.