

# FOLLIES

The Magazine of the Folly Fellowship

No.9 £2.50

THE FOLLY FELLOWSHIP IS A REGISTERED CHARITY, NO.1002672

Spring 1991

LORD PEMBROKE'S PALLADIAN BRIDGE AT STOWE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE. PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL BEVINGTON FROM THE FOLLY FELLOWSHIP PICTURE LIBRARY



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Published four times a year by  
The Folly Fellowship Ltd  
Registered in England No.2600672  
22 Mount View Road, London N4 4HX  
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## THE FOLLY FELLOWSHIP

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Gwyn Headley and Wim Meulenkamp.

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*The hysterical and intemperate outbursts  
expressed in this magazine are not  
necessarily the views of the Editor, or those  
of the Folly Fellowship.*

# SECRETARY'S REPORT

TO MANY PEOPLE APRIL 22ND IS ONE OF those unimportant dates in the year, the day when we remove the balloons after the Queen's birthday celebrations and collect red roses for St George's Day. However for us, April 22nd will be remembered as the day that the Folly Fellowship became a registered charity (no. 1002646) and a company limited by guarantee (no. 2600672).

PHOTO: CLIFF CUTTRIDGE



COME AND SHARE A SLICE OF THIS - THE TOWER OF THE WINDS AT SHUGBOROUGH, THE MODEL FOR THE 1991 CAKE AT THE FOLLY FELLOWSHIP GARDEN PARTY

The Committee has been working towards charitable status for the Fellowship since its inception four years ago, and the achievement is a testament to their work. However we also acknowledge with special thanks the help of our solicitors Lawrence Graham, and Geoffrey Pickerill and Norma Tang in particular, who have patiently advised and guided us through labyrinthine company and charity laws, and generously subsidised their fees.

The advantages in being a charity are too many to list here. One major benefit is that we

qualify for important tax concessions, some of which encourage charitable giving, while others relieve us from tax paying burdens. The process has already begun, with a gracious donation from the Coke Charitable Trust and offers from others. Any member wishing to take advantage of our charitable status by covenanting donations should contact the Secretary. A full report on the benefits and advantages will be included in the next issue of the magazine.

The Folly Fellowship has four trustees - Gwyn Headley, Wim Meulenkamp, Andrew Plumridge and Michael Cousins - who also remain as officers. In addition the Fellowship has appointed Lawrence Graham as solicitors, Matthew Plumridge as accountant and James & Cowper as auditors.

The advantages of becoming a limited company are less obvious but nevertheless important. Your Committee has long been concerned that if the Fellowship were forced to close, any outstanding debts could in theory be claimed from its members. Our new status reduces that obligation to a maximum liability of £1 from any current member.

The beginning of 1991 seemed to be a particularly awkward time, and was made worse when our original bankers reneged on their agreement to provide us with free banking facilities. Their proposal to charge us as a small business would have amounted to annual bank charges of at least £700. The bank's decision could not have been received at a worse time and occurred just prior to, and delaying, the posting of membership renewal notices. Despite efforts to renegotiate, the bank that likes to say Yes said No and we were forced to find a new bank at short notice.

Our new bankers are Drummonds in Admiralty Arch, London. Drummonds is one of London's oldest banking houses, and was established by Andrew Drummond in 1717. It bought its current premises in 1760 on what is believed to have been the site of Oliver Cromwell's Palace. Since then, Drummonds have been bankers to the nobility, the famous and the infamous, as well as notable follyologists such as James Gibbs, James and Robert Adam, Thomas Gainsborough, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and Andrew Plumridge. It seems somewhat fitting that we should continue the folly connection and we look forward to a long and distinguished association.

The bank has already been of considerable assistance and is currently helping in the establishment of a direct debit system for receiving payment. It is unlikely that the system will be operational before the end of this year, and those members who expressed an interest in paying their subscriptions by this means are asked to pay their current year's subscription by cheque in the meantime.

Finally, the date of the Garden Party has now been finalised for Sunday July 21st at Shugborough in Staffordshire - NOT the 27th as suggested in the last issue of the magazine. Shugborough is the ancestral home of the Earls of Lichfield, and the 5th Earl, the photographer Patrick Lichfield, has kindly consented to be our guest of honour. The formal invitations will be sent out shortly.

ANDREW PLUMRIDGE



## 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.

# The 1991 Lawson-Price Prize

GWYN HEADLEY

**T**HE COVER OF THIS ISSUE WAS THE chosen subject of the first prize winner in this year's Lawson-Price Prize for measured drawings. Simon Hutchins of Wantage, a student at Huddersfield Polytechnic, carried off the 2,000 guinea cheque for his finely detailed, comprehensive study of Lord Pembroke's **Palladian bridge at Stowe**. It took the judges over four and a half hours to decide; the quality of entries was markedly superior to last year's. Eight of the entries would have made worthy prizewinners; the battle for third place was particularly keenly fought. Leicester Polytechnic's Jane Gardner just pipped it with her meticulous pencil drawing of the **Rat's Castle - Castle Goring, near Worthing in West Sussex**, a classic example of the quality of work this award is intended to stimulate. Only when the drawings were hung at Painter's Hall in the City of London, where the awards ceremony took place, did Ann Johnstone, a Lawson-Price architect, notice the faint lettering concealed in the foliage: "It's 3.30am. 24/4/91. Sod it - I'm going to bed." Gardner had arrived at the ceremony with an eraser concealed about her person, but it was too late.

Some of the drawings were spectacular. David Macdonald's colour rendering of **Hiorne's Tower at Arundel** was superbly done, as was the **Temple of the Winds at Castle Howard in Yorkshire**, by Amanda Taylor and Mark Dennis from Plymouth Polytechnic. This huge drawing consisted of a colour centre section painted by Taylor, flanked by stern, heavy, black outlines of the building's floor plan and porticos, supported by a frieze of photographs of the building and a white model. An eye-catcher indeed, even if Taylor's painting was



PHOTO: HETTY WILMING

WINNER SIMON HUTCHINS - BEFORE HE HEARD THE NEWS

mounted the wrong way round by a judge who will remain nameless. I apologise. Dennis and Taylor won the 750 guinea second prize; Macdonald's technical tour-de-force could only be highly commended.

Other highly commended entries came from James Ryan with his magnificent

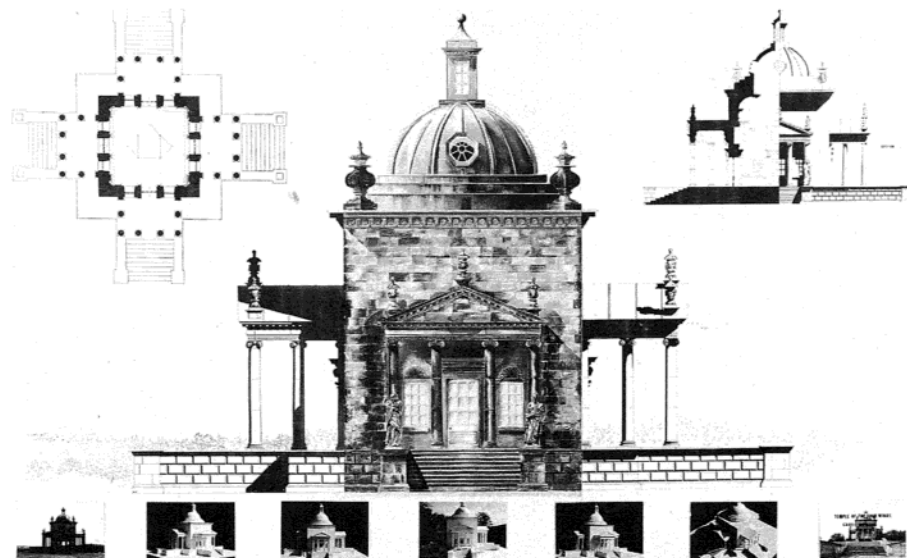
drawing of **Dane John in Canterbury**, a drawing which more than any other evoked the actual sense of place in the landscape of the monument, as well as having superb survey notes; Elaine Toogood's astonishingly detailed presentation of the **Minley Manor Gazebo**; Richard Scott's elegant rendering of **Swainston Temple on the Isle of Wight**, and Jennifer Coldrick's **Hunstanton Hall Octagon**. My personal feeling was of regret that the great majority of entries are too affected by zeitgeist, and thus tended towards the classical orders and favoured garden buildings. I look forward to a great growling Gothic folly, but the awards are made on the quality of the drawing and the survey notes, not on the excitement or otherwise of the chosen subject. And I am but one judge.

The judging committee was chaired by Keith Price, Senior Partner of Lawson-Price, and consisted of David Brown RIBA, nominated by Lawson-Price; Vernon Gibberd RIBA, nominated by the Royal Institute of British Architects (and also Grotto Secretary of the Folly Fellowship); John Earl RICS, of the Theatre Trust, nominated by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors; Andrew Plumridge RIBA and I, nominated by the Folly Fellowship. Judging was lively, loud

and long - eight drawings stood out from the rest, and the merits of each were fiercely argued. The large entry from Manchester Polytechnic was commended on its overall quality, although originals were not submitted as stipulated in the regulations. It was a pity we could only choose three winners, but this was not a caucus race and a consensus had to be reached. At the awards ceremony David Brown made an impassioned plea for the art of measured drawing to resume its rightful position in the skills of modern architects, pointing out that the Lawson-Price Prize was the only significant student award in this field. Brown spoke extempore, without notes; it is hoped that we can persuade him to put his thoughts down on paper for a future edition of FOLLIES. Congratulations to all the entrants, and particularly to the winners and the highly commended entries.

So why are the awards made in guineas? Because we are the Folly Fellowship, that's why, not because we've taken a day off from the turf. I was talking about the prize on a radio programme a few weeks ago, and because one of the other guests was American - Wilhelmina Fernandez, the opera singer currently starring in Carmen Jones at the Old Vic - I explained on air that the guinea was an old British unit of currency equivalent to a pound and a shilling. Everyone nodded. At the end of the show Wilhelmina came up to me. "Gwyn," she said, "that was fascinating. But what's a shilling?"

MARK DENNIS AND AMANDA TAYLOR'S DRAWING OF THE TEMPLE OF THE FOUR WINDS AT CASTLE HOWARD NORTH YORKSHIRE - THE SECOND PRIZE WINNER



# David Salomons' Tower

ALAN TERRILL



PHOTO: ALAN TERRILL

DAVID SALOMONS' TOWER, SPELDHURST

**T**HE TOWER STANDS ON A BANK IMMEDIATELY above David Salomons' House, (now a Health Authority training centre), and any folly-fancier would instantly recognise the tall round castellated tower with smaller staircase tower attached, as the archetypal folly tower. However, the curator of David Salomons' Museum denied it was a folly, as it was built for a useful function, and unusually a lot is known about both its builder and its history, so allow me to elaborate before forming your own conclusions.

The first David Salomons was a financier, much engaged in public affairs, and it was he who fought for the rights of Jews to hold public office, himself becoming the first Jewish Lord Mayor of London. When he died in 1873, his nephew David Lionel Salomons inherited his estate, of which the principal house was Broomhill, near Southborough, Tunbridge Wells. This Mr Salomons was one of those amazing Victorian gentlemen who seemed to be engaged in endless scientific invention, whilst also putting these inventions to practical use and still finding time to pass bills through Parliament in his spare time. His chief passion was electricity, and his was the first house in the country to generate its own power for washing and buttermaking, as well as lighting. To this end he built workshops for electrical experiments, and extended the house considerably to incorporate woodwork and metalworking shops. He also built a

theatre where he would demonstrate scientific instruments such as a machine to measure the speed of light, or to generate indoor lightning. He was also one of the pioneers of the motor car, and held the first car show in this country at Tunbridge Wells, even though the cars had to be taken there on trailers pulled by traction engines! Needless to say the tireless Mr Salomons later pushed a new law through Parliament enabling cars to proceed on roads without being preceded by a man with a red flag.

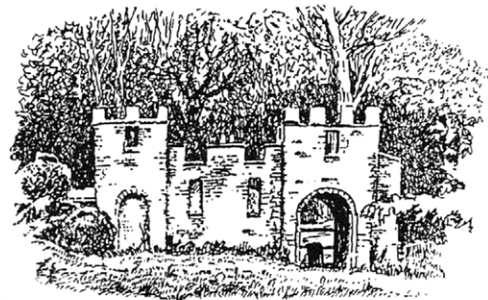
The tower was completed in 1876, and originally had a tall glass pinnacle upon the main tower which housed his astronomical equipment; after a while he tired of this and fitted a powerful 15,000 candlepower arc lamp better to light the devious roads thereabouts. Meteorological instruments were then installed, but eventually the pinnacle was removed, and the tower used as a water tower. A conventional enough way to end its days you might think, but this one has its tank at the bottom! The tower stands on raised ground, its base fronted by a curtain wall incorporating castellations and a couple of small towers – this was built as an apple store, and doubtless the mock castle appearance was necessary to deter scumpers. A flight of stairs leads to the entrance to the tower, and once inside, the circular concrete water tank confronts you. A circular staircase leads downwards to an underground passage linked to the house. Another leads upwards to the next floor where there is a smaller metal water tank linked to the lower one by a series of pipes and valves; doubtless another of Mr Salomons' experiments, but as yet no one has been able to work out what the upper tank was for. On the second floor is a plain room with the mechanism of the clock visible – the clock part has recently been restored by students of the West Kent college, but the chiming part has been left alone for fear of annoying the neighbours. The chimes are still there, but are mounted in a frame on the open roof above. The tower was repointed a few years ago by the same local firm who originally built it, but they have, alas, gone out of business in the last year.

There is a small museum within the college containing several paintings and photographs of the tower, and it is interesting to note the presence of the glass pinnacle in a painting of 1880, but in another of 1884 it has gone, but there appears to be a smaller pinnacle on the staircase turret. By the time of a photograph taken in 1924, the tower was covered in ivy almost to the parapet, but today it stands clean and handsome in its yellow brickwork with red bands, and looks solid enough to last out another century. The staff at the college certainly have faith in it, as they regularly abseil down it as part of one of the courses! If you intend to visit, seek out the curator, who is still researching the history of the tower and the house, but please note that the interior of the tower is not normally open to the public. While you are there, you will doubtless have a glance at the elaborate stable block, which is considerably more ornate than the house. Although David Salomons liked his cars, he was even fonder of his horses, and built them a grand home, complete with all the automatic devices for feeding and drinking that a man of his talents could provide.

# Newark Park - New Follies for Old

NICHOLAS JOHNSON

**I**'D CYCLED FIFTEEN MILES IN A BITTER, wicked April wind up the Cotswold escarpment and across the open fields of fresh green corn and rape, then a wooded lane to the entrance to Newark Park, a rattling cattlegrid by a ha-ha. This 30-room hunting lodge was originally built in the mid-sixteenth century for Sir Nicholas Poyntz of Iron Acton, remodelled by James Wyatt 250 years later. It stands 600ft above sea level on a sharp edge with spectacular views south over the Ozleworth valley towards the Mendips, the Somerset Monument tower clearly visible. Now owned by the National Trust it is let to Texan Robert Parsons who has spent 20 years restoring the house and clearing the 10-acre grounds discovering a Georgian orangery in the process.



NICHOLAS JOHNSON

THE NEW FOLLY CASTLE AT NEWARK PARK

The house is well worth a visit on the few days it is open, not only for the distant views, but for the frieze of ox crania, the old fireplaces and other features as well as the tenant's miscellaneous collection (although perhaps not for the paintings!) However of interest to me is the folly built by Mr Parsons to replace one from the 18th century which has long since disappeared. He has designed a little castle about 25ft across, built from stone, brick and wood. There is an open stair turret (to the right of the larger tower) which climbs to a viewing platform on the tower, better to appreciate the view. There is a fireplace below, and an unglazed wooden gothic window (on the other side from the illustration) only partly enclosed by stone, giving the view from that side of a ruin; requisite with this type of folly!

The golden dragon weathervane on the house still pointed North-East, and the wind whistled like mournful hunting horns in a gale as I left, so I went back home for a much-needed cup of tea.

*NEWARK PARK, Ozleworth, 1 1/2 miles east (as the crow flies) of Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire. OS grid reference ST 781931. The house and grounds are open (National Trust) April, May, August and September, Wednesdays and Thursdays 2-5. A National Trust permitted bridleway passes the folly, but avoids the grounds.*

## Two in a Tower

### GWYN HEADLEY

**W**ELL, FOUR ACTUALLY. ZITA AND Roy Burnham, Yvonne Seeley and I were the first people to stay overnight as guests in Peterson's Folly – the Tower at Sway, Hampshire. A statement like that is circumscribed with conditions. How can we claim to be the first people to sleep in a building which has been standing for 106 years? I'm pretty sure my brother Richard stayed there overnight in 1952 for a wager – whether he slept or not I don't know – but we must have been the first to sleep in crisp cotton sheets on Claridges quality beds on oak floors with curtains at the (now glazed) windows and... you get the picture.

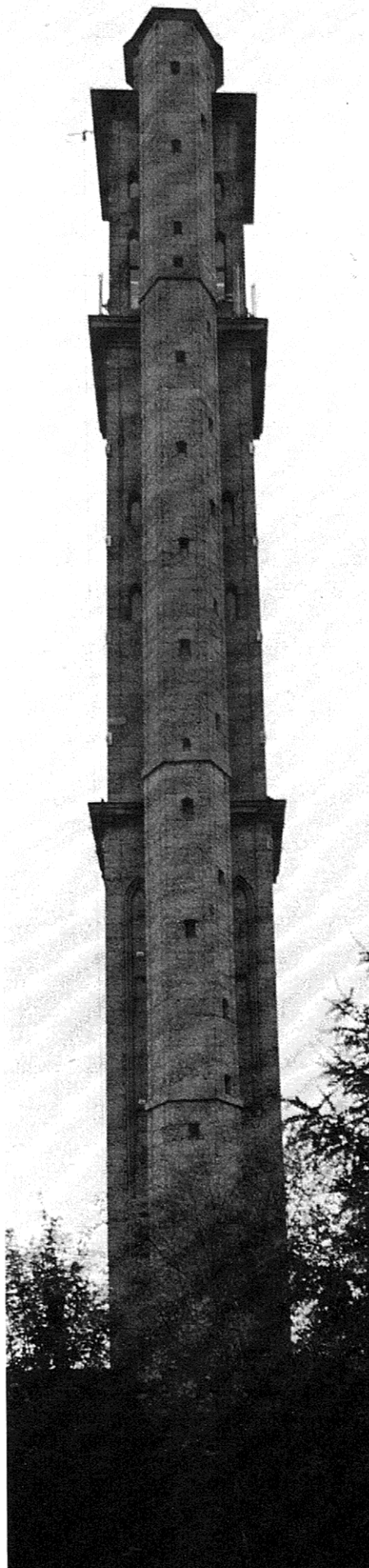
It was, I am told, the second folly tower I had seen. I remember tagging unwisely along with my brother and sisters on an expedition from Hordle vicarage, where one summer forty years ago my father had taken a locum. By the time we reached the tower I was, inevitably, fractious, and looking up at the top of the tower to see the whole vast structure falling past the clouds down on top of me I started to scream. It was the first time I had seen the illusion; the memory is vivid. To calm me or simply scare me into silence my brother hoisted me up over the shattered staircase and sat me on the first firm step, with my legs dangling into the awful void. I was simultaneously fascinated and frightened. Another of those folly things. Let me down. I'm sure I didn't climb it then, although my siblings claimed they did, despite many steps missing and lots of scrambling. And now the old concrete shell of Peterson's Folly, the only skyscraper in the New Forest, is not what it used to be. For this we thank Paul and Julie Atlas.

Paul Atlas bought a bungalow in Sway in 1972. For a further £2,700, he picked up the tower in the back garden. The tower rockets 218 feet out of the ground, thirteen square rooms stacked on top of each other, linked by a spiral staircase tower. Briefly, it was built by Judge Peterson as part of his experiments in using concrete as a building material, but there is little point repeating the colourful history of the Tower here – see *Follies*, pp 81-2.

The next time I saw the folly was in 1973, when I was folly-hunting with the vague idea of a book at the end of it all. Atlas kindly gave me documents from the Milford Historical Society about Judge Peterson's relationship with Mrs Girling and the New Forest Shakers, along with a copy of the measured drawing made in 1967 by the New Forest Rural District Council. It was evident even to my unpractised eye that the 1,990 ton tower was in urgent need of attention. Atlas supplied that attention.

Atlas deals in furniture, motor cars, stocks and shares, property and anything else that catches his fancy. He doesn't particularly enjoy talking about the tower. The notice on his gate merely says THE TOWER. PRIVATE. NO ENTRY, and he has an overdraft of anecdotes about people turning up and demanding admission, stuffing notes through his letterbox saying 'we've come all the way from Blackpool and your notice says

PHOTO: GWYN HEADLEY



PETERSON'S FOLLY, SWAY;  
THE WORLD'S TALLEST B&B

no admission how could you' – it's a problem which he hasn't really come to terms with. Maybe converting it into a guest house is one way of doing it. The process of getting grants allowed him to vent his feelings. "Of course, you'll have to sign this, saying you'll open it to the public," ordered one bureaucrat. "Fine," said Atlas, "I'll sign it, but I'm not going to do it. If you want it opened, then you can come and collect the admissions yourself, because I won't." Nothing more was heard. He got his grant.

When I heard of his plans for the tower I put my name down to stay for the first night. So did the Burnhams, friends of the Atlases, who helped with the elegant interiors. Zita, half French, translated the brochure for potential French visitors and supplied us with the wonderful word *colimaçon*, for a spiral staircase. We had a great evening to launch the tower's new career. Julie Atlas has an unfortunate disability which prevents her from drinking anything but champagne, so we were forced to assist her; it was nearing 3am before we started the 97 step climb to our room. The only thing that wasn't perfect was the weather – low cloud meant we could only see about thirty miles from the top of the tower.

The restoration of the tower over the past eighteen years and the conversion of four floors into guest rooms has cost Atlas over half a million pounds of his own money. English Heritage has helped out. Racial Vodaphone rents the twelfth floor for its mobile phones. The local council has seen it as a Good Thing. But Atlas is resigned to the fact that he'll never recoup his money, and that is what reveals his true feelings about the tower. They'd have to drag him away kicking and screaming.

*The Tower at Sway provides luxurious accommodation for four couples. Each room has an en-suite bathroom, satellite television, a mini-bar, clock radio, tea and coffee-making facilities, telephone with answerphone, and an astonishing view. A substantial breakfast is included in the room cost of £98 per night, and to work it off there is a new hard tennis court and a twenty metre indoor heated swimming pool. Security is excellent, with electronic door and gate locking for the tower and the car park. What you don't get is room service (Bedroom #4 is 97 steps up – they can't go any higher because of the fire regulations) or a restaurant. There are plenty of good local ones. For further details contact Paul or Julie Atlas at The Tower, Sway, Hampshire SO14 16DE. Telephone 0590 682117, fax 0590 683785.*

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## BACK ISSUES OF FOLLIES

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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 £2.50 each plus 40p post and packing.

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# RUNDOWN

## KENTISH FOLLY / FOLLY OF KENT

✦ At Chiddingstone in Kent Dudley Quirk has connected three barns with a sham wall and painted the whole ensemble to give an allegedly convincing simulacrum of a French château. We haven't yet seen it, so pictures please.

## RED ARMY FACTION

✦ Lord Palumbo still hasn't built his straight tower of Pisa. However he's just applied for planning permission to erect 11,000 lifesize steel sculptures of soldiers on his Berkshire estate, according to the *Newbury Weekly News*. Other sources reduce the 'Red Army' to a more manageable 1,100 – and they're two dimensional (like many soldiers we know). He plans to erect them on a 275 metre path of white stone chippings. 275 metres. That's the length of nearly fourteen cricket pitches. Hmmm.

## MILITANT

✦ With 91 acceptances (at the time of writing) to the Banwell Day Out on June 9th and the forthcoming Bath Follies Tour (see separate story), it looks as if the South-Western branch of the Fellowship is the most active division at the moment. But distant rumblings and mutterings are reaching us from across the Channel. The first meeting of the Dutch branch, mysteriously code-named 'Militant' by its adherents, is being planned for late June. No doubt in good time they will inform us of their plans, preferably not by abseiling into Mount View Road and fire-bombing us.

## HIGH COO

*Heights don't frighten cats  
and vertigo has never  
occurred to a bird.*

✦ Sorry. Just a few lines which came to us on hearing about Mark Wilkinson's wonderful 16 ft square tree house, described in the June issue of *Homes and Gardens*. Wilkinson is a furniture designer from Wiltshire who built this 12 ft high palacette thirty feet up in the branches of an ash tree, serenaded by 'louder than usual birdsong'. He claims to have enough material to do hundreds of tree houses like this, so if you need one urgently, get in touch with him at Overton House, High Street, Bromham, Wiltshire SN15 2HA. Tel. 0380 850004.

## FARM TIME

✦ If you'd ever wondered what happened to the huge clock which dominated the concourse at St Pancras Station for so many years (we hadn't), you will be relieved to learn that it is still alive and ticking in a farmyard at Thurgarton, Nottinghamshire. Roland Hoggard spent 20 years restoring the 1 ton clock with its 18ft diameter face; it now runs off a 12 volt car battery.

## PHONE FOLLY

✦ Someone at Racal Vodaphone is reading *FOLLIES* – come on, own up! They seem to be tracking down every folly tower in the country. We now hear that East Dorset County Council

has granted the mobile phone company permission to install its aerials on Horton Tower – Sturt's Folly. We'd be interested to know how our members feel about this. Let us know. We'll tell Racal.

## WATER TOWERS

✦ We are all too aware of the propensity to label any unusual piece of architecture as a folly, particularly so in the case of towers. The exuberant architecture of late Victorian water towers is a case in point – several of them merited inclusion in *Follies*. A recent article by Jill Allibone in *Country Life* reminded us of some of these splendid specimens, now mostly redundant since the general introduction of mains water supplies. Many of them doubled up as belvederes, and a reproduction of the architect's elevation of a rejected design for the water tower at Minley Manor in Hampshire made an interesting comparison with Elaine Toogood's entry for this year's Lawson-Price Prize of the gazebo at Minley.

## IRISH GEORGIAN SOCIETY

✦ A member has sent us a programme of events for the London Chapter of the Irish Georgian Society, which looks to be flourishing. One intriguing outing is a tour of country houses in Devon held in conjunction with the 20 Ghost Club – driving through the Devon countryside in a fleet of Rolls-Royces. How wonderful. You've missed that one, but details about the London Chapter can be had from Mrs Patricia Behr, 140 Coleherne Court, Old Brompton Road, London SW5 0DY.

## A NEW HIORNE?

✦ The Folly Fellowship Award for the longest delay between design and construction is currently held by the Repton Temple at Sheringham Hall in Norfolk – designed in 1812 and finally built in 1975. Now there seems to be a challenger on the horizon – Dr Nat Alcock of the Vernacular Architecture Group wants to reconstruct a Francis Hiorne summerhouse from a detailed plan of 1777 in an urban garden in Warwick. He would be interested to hear of anyone who could help with information. He should also come to see David Macdonald's masterly painting of Hiorne's Tower in Arundel, held in the Fellowship's offices at Mount View Road. Contact Dr N W Alcock FSA, 18 Portland Place, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 5EU

## OUT TO LUNCH

✦ At last a grotto builder has confessed to what we all secretly suspected – grottoes are nothing more than the discarded remnants of Lunch. Belinda Eade, who worked on Leeds Castle Grotto and helped restore the Hampton Court grotto, confesses that the grotto she built in her back garden in west London is partly comprised of shells she was served for lunch in Normandy. "I cycled home with the shells stinking of garlic," she admitted. If you need help with your shellfish – or even your grotto – Belinda Eade can be reached on 071-743 3633.

## TEMPLE BAR

✦ Now Terry Farrell's grandiose development for the north precinct of St Paul's has been revealed, will Temple Bar be allowed to remain mouldering in Theobald's Park?

## MEULENKAMP AWARD

✦ Congratulations to Michael Cousins, the clear winner of this year's Meulenkamp Award with 53 – count them, 53 – footnotes to his article on the Banwell Caves in this issue.

# RUNDOWN WALES

## ITALY BACH

✦ Mark Bourne, a retired caravan park owner, is busy recreating the architectural masterpieces of Italy in his garden at Corris, near Machynlleth on the Gwynedd / Powys border. So far he has built the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the Rialto bridge, the Tempietto in Rome, Florence Cathedral and twenty others, visiting Italy twice a year to brush up on details.

## NEW FOLLY FOR OLD

✦ CROFT is powering on with its plan to rerec the folly tower in Pontypool Park. The Campaign for the Rebuilding of the Old Folly Tower is packing the local press with stories and appeals, they have assembled a formidable committee, secured the Lord Lieutenant of Gwent as patron, got Pontypool Theatre Club to put on a fundraising revue entitled *Folly Mixture*, raised almost half the money needed for building work to start and look well set to start reconstruction as planned in 1992. At the time of writing the War Ministry – sorry, Ministry of Defence in *NewSpeak* – has not contributed. Perhaps they should. After all, they pulled it down in 1940 because its 37 foot stature made it too prominent a landmark for the Luftwaffe.

## BUSY BUILDING

✦ John Taylor of commercial architects Chapman Taylor can't stop building. There may be a recession in the property industry, but that just seems to allow him more time to add to his already impressive collection of follies at Castell Gyrn in Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd (see *Follies*, p. 137). So far the collection includes the Sundial Folly, the Alice Gatehouse, assorted pillars and statuary, the Palladian Sheep Shelter and a gazebo under construction.

## DAFFY DEFINITIONS

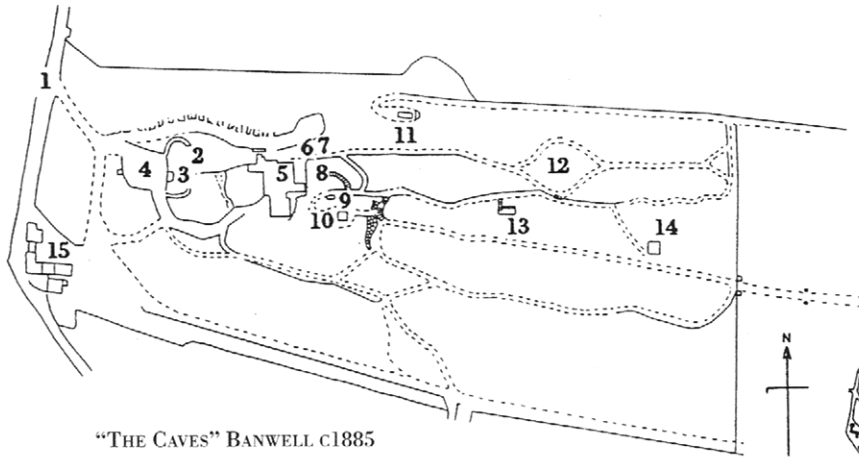
✦ Bodelwyddan Castle in Clwyd is another overly large Victorian gothic castellated house; not a folly in the proper sense, although the local paper calls it one. Enter Clwyd County Council. They bought the former boarding school in 1982 for £600,000 to serve as a conference and exhibition centre. So far they have spent £5 million on it, received £1.1 million in European regional grants, owe £430,000 in debt charges, and spend £1.3 million a year to keep it running. Now they want to sell it. How do you define a folly?

# The Caves at Banwell, Avon

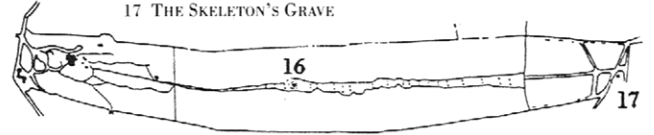
MICHAEL COUSINS

The following story concerns many characters: the names Beard, Randolph and Law feature prominently in the history of Banwell; then there are other, virtually

unknown names like Samuel Rodway, Richard Cook, George Webb and Thomas Roper, local men whose brief claim to fame was realising the dreams of others.



- 1 THE SITE OF ORIGINAL ENTRANCE ARCH
- 2 THE BONE CAVE
- 3 THE LOWER GROTTTO / DRUID'S TEMPLE
- 4 SITE OF THE CROMLECH / TRILITHION
- 5 THE "BISHOPS'S COTTAGE"
- 6 SITE OF THE TEMPLE
- 7 ORIGINAL ENTRANCE ARCH TO THE STALACTITE CAVERN
- 8 ENTRANCE TO THE STALACTITE CAVERN
- 9 ALCOVE SEAT
- 10 PEBBLE SUMMERHOUSE / GROTTTO
- 11 OSTEON (OSTEOICON)
- 12 RUSTIC ARBOUR IN MRS. POWELL'S FLOWER GARDEN
- 13 RUSTIC PROSPECT SEAT
- 14 THE GAZEBO
- 15 THE LODGE
- 16 THE TOWER
- 17 THE SKELETON'S GRAVE



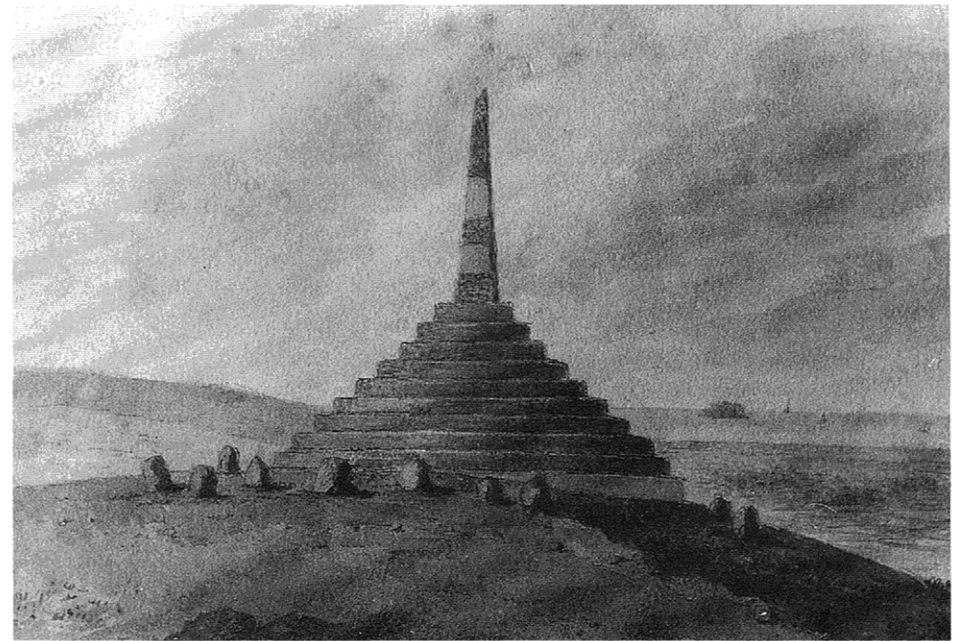
**F**IVE MILES TO THE EAST OF THE SEASIDE resort of Weston-Super-Mare, separated from it by the M5, lies the small village of Banwell. The terrain rises just to the south to form a ridge, now well forested, running east to west. This is Banwell Hill.

Over the centuries miners would dig in the hill in search of lead, ochre, lapis calaminaris and manganese, all of which abounded there. The existence of caverns there was first recorded back in 1761 as "...Caves lately discovered..."<sup>1</sup> There is, however, compelling evidence that one cave in particular, the Stalactite Cavern (also known as the upper or large cavern), was known about by locals as early as 1740<sup>2</sup>. The fact that this was described "as being as large in dimensions as Banwell church"<sup>3</sup> may be pure coincidence with another tradition that the village choir descended into it to "give a fine effect to their voices"<sup>4</sup>.

The long-held belief, generally alluded to from John Rutter's *Delineations of Somersetshire*<sup>5</sup>, is that the Stalactite Cavern was rediscovered by William Beard, a local farmer. His curiosity excited by Professor Buckland's descriptions of the discovery of caves at Kirkdale in 1821, and recollecting stories of the "leers" heard as a child, he set about locating and re-opening the shaft. Beard was assisted in the task by two local miners, John Webb and [Isaac] Coleman, and it was this re-discovery that prompted the interest of Dr Francis Randolph, vicar of Banwell, and George Henry Law, who became Bishop of Bath and Wells following the death of Dr Beadon on April, 21st, 1824.

Another historian, William Phelps, vicar of Meare and Bicknoller, who visited the Caves on June 21st, 1826, in the company of the Bishop and the Rev. John Skinner, Rector of Camerton, relates very much the same story in his history of Somersetshire<sup>6</sup>.

In fact Rutter is very careful not to give Beard full credit for the discovery; "he [Beard] was in some measure the discoverer"; "...and happening to meet John Webb...was directed to the supposed entrance". It is clear, therefore, that it was Webb who knew the location of the original shaft and not Beard. This evasiveness may be answered, in part, by a letter Rutter received from Dr David Williams, Rector of Bleadon and Kingston Seymour<sup>7</sup>. In preparing *Delineations*, Rutter frequently communicated



"THE OBELISK ON BANWELL HILL, SOMERSETSHIRE, AS IT APPEARED IN 1839, BEFORE THE PRESENT TOWER WAS BUILT". JB SEPT 9TH 1839

with the clergy of Banwell and the outlying villages, but this one particular item tells a different story behind the finding of the cavern. Written on January 4th, 1829, before publication of the book, it says:

"...I hope you will give the "quantum merit" of the discovery of Banwell Caves where it is due...I regret to say, tho' he assumes the merit, Professor Beard had nothing to do with it...to ascertain the truth of a rumour that such a cave existed, [Randolph] offered two men a pound to clear out the shaft that led to it. The men worked a week or ten days without success - it was abandoned - subsequently Coleman...and another [Webb], thinking that the minerals might repay them, continued clearing out the chimney and ultimately came to the large Cavern".

Damning evidence indeed!

The Stalactite Cavern would make a spectacular attraction as an excursion for visitors to Weston and from outlying areas, and

donations could be used to augment the funds of the local Charity School, which opened on August 1st, 1824. This cause may well be the reason that the good Doctor determined to seek out the cave in the first place.

Irrespective of to whom credit was due, the land belonged to the See of Bath and Wells, and Bishop Law and Randolph wanted to find another access to the Cavern - the original entrance was not easy, the descent having to be made by ladders to quite a depth. And so a fissure, about eight inches wide, in the side of an old stone quarry and running in the direction of the cave, was followed up. What Beard, Coleman and Webb unexpectedly stumbled across in September 1824, proved to be even more rewarding: the Bone Cavern<sup>8</sup>.

The fissure led into a smaller cave filled with sand, mud and a large number of animal bones, hence its name. How the bones came to be deposited there is more than adequately dealt with elsewhere, as are descriptions of the bones, many of which came from extinct creatures<sup>9</sup>. Needless to say this find attracted even more attention, not just from the curious but also from

academics, including Professor Buckland. The extent of Beard's involvement is unclear but he acted in the capacity of guide to visitors to the caves, and he also amassed a remarkable collection of the best bones at his residence Wint Hill.

To further the exploration of the organic contents, Randolph and Law initiated a subscription. This fund may well have been separate to the donations of visitors, but there is certainly conflict as to what the latter was intended to be used for.

In his visitors book, Beard precedes the entries for one season with the statement, "Gentlemen and Ladies I have to inform you that I rec'd a letter bearing date 22nd of June 1826 – from Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells wherein he request that all money that I have and money receive of visitors who see the caves and to be expended in exploring and improving same"<sup>10</sup>.

And yet according to Rutter, "...the book in which visitors generally enter their names, most of whom add a small gratuity, which has hitherto been expended in increasing the access to them; the surplus will hereafter be appropriated to Banwell Charity School"<sup>11</sup>.

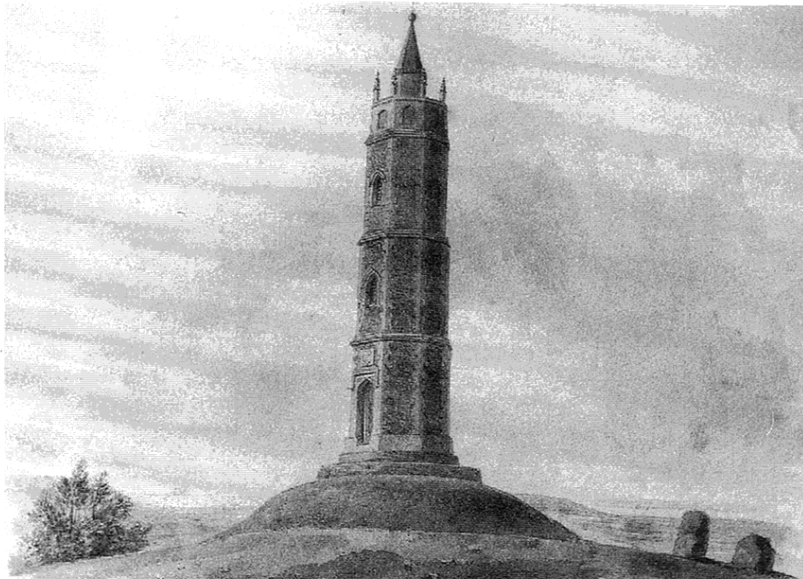
Finally, George Bennett, the Banwell Historian, was led to understand "...the money is intended to be applied for the purpose of purchasing cloathing for the use of the second poor of the parish and I know not of a better purpose to which it could be appropriated"<sup>12</sup>.

Beard's expenses suggest that although the needy were cared for out of the donations, the majority was spent on improving the estate.

From two major sources and other contemporary material, it is possible to derive a fairly accurate history of the estate. These are John Buckler's original pencil drawings of Banwell<sup>13</sup> and Beard's expenses and visitors book. The latter runs in seasonal form, generally from May/June, but with the first season commencing 20th April, 1825.

#### THE COTTAGE

Having purchased the lease of the ground from his tenant, one of the Bishop's primary considerations was somewhere he and his guests could rest when visiting the caves. Thus, on the 25th day of May, 1827, the first post for an ornamental cottage was fixed. We know from the Rev. Skinner's journals<sup>14</sup> that this was "after a plan given by Buckler" of which his sketch views still survive although the front bay window he intended was not incorporated<sup>15</sup>. The layout was typically simple with a parlour in front backed by the kitchen and adjacent room; the roof was thatched and the walls whitewashed<sup>16</sup>. By 1829 a contiguous stable and shed were added, but for some strange reason it was not until 24th April 1832 that the Bishop actually slept at his Cottage. In the following year the cottage was greatly enlarged and altered by his son, Chancellor Law, when, for example, a second floor with a single balcony was added and the rustic verandah extended along the entire north and west fronts. Sometime in the latter half of the century, the cottage acquired the name "The Caves".



"THE TOWER ON BANWELL HILL, SOMERSETSHIRE, ERECTED BY THE RIGHT REVEREND GEORGE HENRY LAW D.D. LORD BISHOP OF BATH AND WELLS A.D. 1840 " JB SEPT 20TH 1848

So much for the picturesque Cottage, but much more was done to prettify and enhance the scene. Almost from the very beginning the Plantation on top of the hill was started, with paths created and ornamental shrubs planted along the routes. Other buildings soon started to appear.

#### THE RUSTIC SEAT / PEBBLE SUMMER HOUSE

On the high ground just behind the Cottage, Beard built "his Lordships curious seat above the Caverns". There was evidently an earlier building on the site for Buckler made two pencil drawings on June 27th, 1828, showing a thatched roof<sup>17</sup>. We shall probably never know if this formed the basis for the present structure or if any of the materials were re-used, but in March 1829, the mason was paid "when the foundation of the seat at the top of the Plantation was laid".

This structure again took the form of a small room, with three open gothic arches in the west, or front wall and single openings in each side. Besides a seat, we also know there was a flat roof and that a Mr Webb ornamented the ceiling. The pebbles that still decorate the walls and pillars were picked from Weston beach. In his *Delineations*, Rutter included a view of the Ornamental Cottage, which also shows the summer house. The rear corner pillars were capped with rustic stone pyramids, and gables featured above the middle third of each wall. Barbara Jones mentions "statues" of a lion and "camel" that adorned two of the corner piers<sup>18</sup>; vestiges of the latter now lie on the ground.

After 1829 Beard no longer refers to the "Rustic seat on the top"; instead attention focuses on the Grotto. In the recognised sense, such a "building" almost certainly never existed at Banwell, but in more general terms there were two grottoes, as we shall see later. The "Bishops Grotto at the Cavern Plantation" would appear to be none other than the curious seat. This inference is first seen in the journals of John Skinner, where the text refers to "two [sketches] from a Gothic Seat on the highest point in the garden", but annotated on the actual sketches as views from the grotto<sup>19</sup>.

A lot of attention was paid to "the back part of the Grotto", with curious stones being specially bought. Again from Barbara Jones we know that the back wall had three shallow niches and above a gable rising between two mediaeval carvings<sup>20</sup>. One of Buckler's views suggests there was also a motif over the central niche<sup>21</sup>. Even to Miss Jones there was analogy enough to compare the ceiling with the grotto at Barwick! Building work continued sporadically throughout 1830, in which time his Lordship's coat of arms was fixed in the front, and spilled over into the following year's season when Mr Webb was paid for fixing the images on the grotto.

It is more than mere supposition that the summer house and grotto are synonymous. Inspecting the building even as it stands today it is easy to conceive that its original form was much more extensive and elaborate. Further evidence comes when Samuel Rodway was paid for fixing pebbles in the floor of the Grotto in 1833, and for further pebble work at the "Pebble Grotto" in 1836 (the only other building known to have a pebble floor was the Gazebo which according to Bennett was not moved to Banwell Hill until the following year!<sup>22</sup>)

Directly behind the grotto, and set into a wall, is a Gothic arch, once fitted with a wooden, studded door, entering into the Plantation and "carriageway". Immediately upon passing through this portal a flight of rude steps winds down into a cutting where in 1829, a seat was built under the rock. Above this niche was a tablet, fixed under a pediment with the Bishop's coat of arms. Buckler recorded the following inscription in 1833<sup>23</sup> (lines appended by Hughes to Milton's "Il Penseroso"):

*Here let Time's creeping winter shed,  
His hoary snow around my head,  
And while I feel by fast degrees  
My sluggish blood wax chill and freeze  
Let thought unveil to my fixed eye  
The scenes of deep eternity.  
Till life dissolving at the view,  
I wake, and find the vision true.*

This was still present when Barbara Jones first visited Banwell prior to 1953, but has since disappeared.

#### THE STALACTITE AND BONE CAVERNS

The Bone Cave was discovered in an attempt to improve access to the Stalactite Cavern, and even then the two were never connected to fulfil this aim. Instead a new entrance to the upper cave was eventually made, the curving descent from the cutting below the summer house which exists today. From contemporary drawings<sup>24</sup> the original opening is known to be situated just to the west of the front of the house – the arch now filled with boulders and rubble. This extended some twelve feet before encountering the descent proper. Over the mouth of this arch was the inscription<sup>25</sup>:

*O thou, who, trembling, viewst this cavern's gloom,  
Pause and reflect on thy eternal doom,  
Think what the punishment of sin will be  
In the abyss of endless misery*

It is not precisely known when the new entrance was made<sup>26</sup>, but it is in keeping with the rest of the work on the estate, carrying the same pyramidal motifs each side of a rustic pediment.

Nor is the present Bone Cave entrance, dating from 1826, the one first penetrated. Through examination the "west end" of the cave has been deduced as the original entrance, but this was, and still is, blocked with dry stone walling and mortar. A passage ascends behind this and must surface in the garden, probably near the Privy! A drawing made by Skinner in 1826<sup>27</sup> would seem to detail the relationship between the original entrances to the two caves, but precise locations are difficult to gauge since the Cottage had yet to be built.

As a warning to the curious visitor, the inscription over the later entrance read<sup>28</sup>:

*Here let the scoffer of God's holy word  
Behold the traces of a deluged world,  
Here let him learn in Banwell Cave t'adore  
The Lord of Heaven, then go and scoff no more*

(this shows similarities with, and may have been derived from the original verse which was composed by Skinner, at the suggestion of the Bishop in 1830:

*O mortal pause while standing on the brink  
Of this dark gulf, and ere you pass below  
Oh dread eternity – O pause and think  
Whose untried depths may lead to endless woe*<sup>29</sup>

THE CROMLECH (DRUIDICAL CIRCLE AND TRILITHON)  
One of the Bishop's many friends was the Rev. William Lisle Bowles. In 1828 he published a poem "Days Departed; or, Banwell Hill: A Lay of the Severn Sea", and it may well be the Reverend's interest in Druids that influenced the building of the Cromlech or Trilithon, close to the entrance of the Bone Cave.

Beard refers to "Pillars for the Stone table" and "halling the stone table" in the latter half of 1829, but it is uncertain if this relates specifically to the Trilithon. Three years later, however, stones were brought for the Cromlech but again their precise use is uncertain. We know that Beard considered the trilithon as at least part of the Cromlech, but it is equally applicable to the ring of standing stones which surrounded the stepped mound.

Why Druids? One theory is that it was the Bishop's way of turning people back to the Church – all it took was a visit to the Bone Cave and Beard to relate how the Flood caused the bones to be in the cave and how Druidism perished as a consequence of their pagan practices!

#### THE GAZEBO

In the summer of 1825, Dr Randolph erected a hermitage or summer house on Banwell Camp, situated about half-a-mile east of the village<sup>30</sup>. The Rev. Skinner makes particular note of partaking of a syllabub there during a summer evening<sup>31</sup>. In 1834, three years after the vicar died, the Bishop paid to have the Gazebo removed to a spot on Banwell Hill<sup>32</sup>.

By March 15th of that year the Gazebo had been re-erected on Banwell Hill, when work on the roof was underway with laths and nails. At the beginning of the tenth season (1834-35)

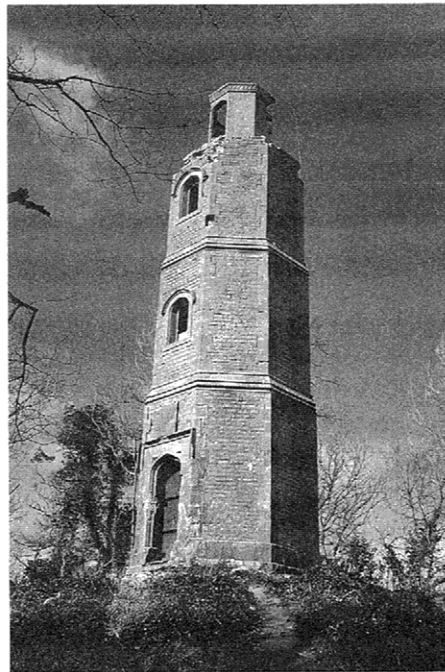


PHOTO: MICHAEL COUSINS

THE TOWER ON BANWELL HILL, 1990

pebbles were fixed in the floor and an inscription stone fixed over the door by Samuel Rodway. We know also that the building was plastered inside and out, then painted. Apart from the rustic-decoration in the form of gothic windows shuttered on the inside, iron ore spars and stones were used in ornamenting the ceiling. On 14th August Mr Roper was paid for painting the Inscription stone at the Gazebo in memory of Dr Randolph.

A suitable building features in Buckler's views of January, 1835<sup>33</sup>, but it appears to sit just too low down the side of the hill to be the Gazebo. From these drawings, and one which accompanied a later guidebook<sup>34</sup>, this structure had a steep, pyramid roof (possibly tiled or planked) with a verandah circling the exterior below deep overhanging eaves.

#### THE LOWER GROTTTO

The second half of 1834 saw five days "building the seats in front of the Cromlech", and "6 Days work at the Alcove" which, for the most part, was completed by January 1835. On the 20th of the month Buckler again put pencil to paper in the first of two visits he made that year. Two views<sup>35</sup> depict the alcove and its rusticated, niched wall, with the Cromlech in front. There was a second, lower screen on the opposite side of the Cromlech of which only a small section now remains. The curving path up to the Bone Cave was completed by then but still awaiting its arch.

This alcove, with its five seats and fronted by two gothic arches, constitutes the second grotto, to which several references are made by Beard in his expenses. One such entry refers to "plastering the Lower Grotto...", pieces of which are still visible on the interior even now. When the oval stone table was fitted is unrecorded but it is mentioned in the accounts for the fifteenth season (1839-40). Above the arches is a pediment and just below an inscribed marble tablet<sup>36</sup>:

*Here, where once Druids trod in times of yore  
And stain'd their altars with a victim's gore,  
Here, now, the Christian ransomed from above  
Adores a God of mercy and of love.*

Perhaps one of the saddest losses to the estate is that of the many arches that once reigned so gloriously. Beard's pièce de resistance was "The Arch over the Iron Gate" at the main entrance. It was built to his own plan in May 1839, and out of his own pocket at a cost of £4.7s.0. Two casts of the Bishop's coats of arms, or heads, were added to the arch. The Arch "fell down" as a result of a collision by a farm vehicle in recent years, although one of the original pillars still survives as a reminder of its stature.

There were two rustic arches, built in April 1836, using curious stones from Bleadon Hill. One of these is almost certainly that at the Bone Cave which appears in Buckler's drawing that June<sup>37</sup>.

It is not too difficult to imagine visitors taking the winding path from the cottage into the clearing with the Cromlech and lower grotto, and then Beard guiding them through the rustic arch and then down into the dank and gloom of Bone Cavern.

#### THE TEMPLE

In the early part of 1835 work was certainly underway on the Temple. There was only ever one such structure in Beard's time, the Druids Temple being a recent appellation for the lower grotto, which simply adds to the confusion. The only telling evidence of this now lost building comes from two pencil drawings by Buckler<sup>38</sup>, supplemented by Beard's accounts. Situated between the northern wall of the house and the entrance to the large cave stood a portico of four Tuscan columns. The pediment was surmounted by three ball finials. One surmises that it was intended as a place of contemplation; there were stone seats, plastered walls, an ornamented ceiling (taking 35 days to complete) and a sculptor was brought in specifically to carve three images. Certainly by June 23rd it was sufficiently complete and worthy for Buckler to commit it to paper. Why and when it disappeared is still a mystery.

#### THE LODGE

The next building to appear, in April of the following year, was the Lodge. Now sadly neglected and forlorn it escapes the eye of most visitors to the caves but has a charm equal to any of the other creations. Curious stones from Bleadon Hill were used in the pillars and the whole structure was built within two months by the local workers.

#### THE OSTEON OR OSTEOICON

The twelfth season (1836-37) saw the creation of the Osteen, or Osteoicon. The name is derived from its function, a repository for the bones. Even today the gold-coloured stones glow amidst the daffodils, as a backdrop of bees bustle through their daily routine. Originally hundreds of spas and crystals were used to decorate the exterior, to which Richard Cook and William Fletcher were paid for fixing an inscription in December, 1836.

The inscription referred to is uncertain, but Buckler's views of the Osteoicon made on September 14th, 1836 depict two "tablets" over the entrance door at the western end<sup>39</sup>. One can only surmise from their size that one was the ancient marble mentioned in the Gentleman's Magazine of 1839<sup>40</sup> (the writer of the article states that it was inserted in the wall at the eastern end, but this seems incorrect):



THE PEBBLE SUMMER HOUSE / GROTTTO, 1990

DEO MAGNO ETEATO BONO . VAL . VALENS . V . P .  
 PRAEFECT . TEMPLVM MARDERIS DIOCLITIANI OBTVRNCATO  
 NE QVOD CAPVS . PVB . M . E . PVDELVIS .

L . SEMPRONIVS PROCVLIVS . VETERANVS . EX CLASSE MISENSIS . MIL . ANN . XXVI  
 SIBI . ET . CONIUGI SVAE ET LIBERTIS . LIBATABVSQ . POSTERISQ . EORVM .

The second of Buckler's "tablets" may be the notice appended to the marble saying that it was brought from Italy by Col. Stephens, of Camerton House; to have been purchased at the sale of his collection, by the Rev. Richard Warner, Rector of Chelwood; and presented by him to the Bishop.

Barbara Jones offers an equally enticing alternative<sup>41</sup>:

*Here mid diluvial relics in this cell  
 Let musing heavenly contemplation dwell  
 And hence beholding him who reigns above  
 Adore a God of mercy and of love*

In size the Osteon measured 22 feet long, but was slightly ovate in plan, being 10 feet wide in the middle with a thatched roof overhanging sufficiently to make a corridor around the outside<sup>42</sup>. This small shrine was appropriately designated (though misspelt) TO OSTĒON although Buckler even gives several variations on the spelling of this<sup>43</sup>: οστέοδεχον; ΟΣΤΕΟΙΚΙΟΝ; TO OSTEODECHON and osteoikion.

Along the ridge of the hill ran a "carriageway" through the middle of the Plantation and by a path leading from the hill to the Bone Cave there was once a stone with yet another inscription<sup>44</sup>:

*Reader: descending from this awful brow  
 Survey the wonders in the cave below  
 Thence, 'mid these relics of a deluged world  
 Look up from Nature unto Nature's God*

Just to the east of the gazebo is a gated wall running north to south, the gatepiers possibly once forming another of the Bishop's arches. Thereafter the track is bounded on each side by a series of rough stones spaced at regular intervals. The mid-point of the hill is marked today by the Bishop's crowning achievement – the Tower.

#### THE OBELISK & TOWER

There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of Buckler's drawings – as a recorder of facts he was exemplary. The Pigott Collection, now in the Local History Library, Taunton, contains a few of his completed aquatints of Banwell which are very revealing. One view, dated September 9th, 1839, is annotated "The Obelisk on Banwell Hill, Somersetshire, as it appeared in 1839, before the present Tower was built."<sup>45</sup> This caption does not appear on the original pencil drawing<sup>46</sup> and so Buckler must have thought the view warranted further clarification. Since no further mention of the obelisk has come to light, by visitors or Beard, it seems it was short-lived (probably erected c.1836-7) and the likelihood is that it was the first attempt at a monument to top Banwell Hill. The fact that there are no entries recorded in Beard's accounts indicate that it was paid for directly out of the bishop's own pocket.

The same comment applies to the octagonal Tower; a much more substantial affair. Built of Knightcote lias with freestone dressings, it originally soared some 60 feet high. If the obelisk was still extant in the September of 1839, then the tower was built at remarkable speed and work must have been sufficiently complete by June 1840, for William Cuff amongst others was mowing at the Tower. Even in those days vandalism was in evidence – Beard's entry for October 1842 records "Gave Henry Cuff for giving information of the Persons that cast stones at the Tower Door". Originally there was an inscription over the door, but this has long since been weathered away. Buckler's preliminary drawing of the tower, however, holds a secret, for on the verso he made a note of the elusive lines<sup>47</sup>:

*Hanice Sublime Nectice  
 Turrem  
 Georgius Henricus Law, S.T.P.  
 Bathoniensis et Wellensis  
 Episcopus  
 Gratus Posuit  
 Anno Domini  
 MDCCCXL*

The top was actually a belfry and Ringers are recorded as visiting the Tower in the summer of 1840. This gives credence to the story that the

tower served as a signal station when the Bishop was in residence, an observer being posted in the tower to watch for a beacon requesting his Lordship's presence at Wells. Certainly it was used as an observation post by the Home Guard during the last war, but since then it has been vandalised and become very dilapidated, the belfry finally falling down in January 1976. A trust has now been set up to preserve and restore this monument – scaffolding now shrouds its outline and hopefully work will soon commence.

Beyond the Tower, the carriage way continues to the edge of the plantation, again bounded by a wall and gateway. The track then leads down to a small copse before diverging towards Wint Hill, William Beard's house, or towards the church and allotment gardens. In the middle of the copse is a single stone marking the grave of a man...

#### THE SKELETON

Every folly should have a story behind it, but the allusion by Barbara Jones that it was the discovery of a skeleton in 1822 that determined Beard to re-open the cave has no real grounds<sup>48</sup>. This date first surfaces in Francis Knight's *The Sea-Board of Mendip* but is incorrect, possibly the result of a printing error<sup>49</sup>. Almost certainly her single reference on Banwell, Miss Jones copied this mistake in *Follies and Grottoes* – more recent works have, likewise, copied her.

In fact the skeleton was discovered in 1842 and although much scepticism surrounds this subject, there are sources to support its verity. As John Whereat noted in his guide, "while some additions were progressing [to the cottage], a human skeleton was discovered... Mr Beard obtained permission to have it removed to the eastern end of the hill, where it is re-interred in a brick grave, with some funeral shrubs and trees around, and a piece of rock at its head as a monumental stone, on which Mr Beard had printed a few lines..."<sup>50</sup>. In fact sometime between March 13th and April 24th 1844, Beard paid numerous labourers "for fixing the large stone on the new Grave where the lately discovered skeleton are now buried", and Thomas Roper for fixing the epitaph<sup>51</sup>:

#### *A Human Skeleton Discovered near the Bishop's Cottage 1842*

*Beard with his kindness brought me to this spot  
 As one unknown and long forgot  
 He made my grave and buried me here  
 When there was no kind friend to shed a tear  
 My bones are here but my spirit is fled  
 And for years unknown numbered with the dead  
 Read on as I am now so shall you be  
 Prepare for death and follow me*

The "Professor", as Beard was also referred to, goes on to record the discoveries of other skeletons near Banwell. The first, found around October 1852, was buried "on the hill" with an inscribed rock to mark the spot, and then a second in the July of 1855<sup>52</sup>. The latter was buried "by the side of the other". These entries suggest that the remains were re-interred in more than one spot.

George Henry Law died on 22nd September 1845, and although his son continued to visit the Caves until 12th October 1864, no more buildings were erected. The grounds were still kept for the benefit of visitors, but the numbers dwindled as Beard aged. His spidery entries of their names finally ceased in June 1865 and this must be taken as the time when the estate started

to decline. The Plantation grew until it was deforested around the time of the First World War, only to be replaced by the invasion of sycamore resident today.

The Second World War saw military occupation in the area and the loss of the Cromlech, removed because it impeded the drivers of army lorries! There were surely other casualties and abuse – the Home Guard, it is understood, dug down some four feet by the gravestone without coming across the skeleton.

The estate was auctioned in December 1945 following the death of Mr Leonard Guy<sup>53</sup>, and again in July 1978 after years of decay under the ownership of the late Mr R. Heal. The wrong is slowly being righted – Ronald and Yvonne Sargent and Margaret and John Haynes bought the property jointly and are effecting a gradual restoration of both house and gardens. The adjacent farm has decimated much in the area of Cromlech, Lower Screen and, of course, the original entrance arch. As a consequence of the latter, a new, less dramatic drive has been created further up.

The plight of the Tower has already been covered, but what of the other buildings? The summer house is in urgent need of attention; sheets of pebbles are coming adrift and freestone tabling falling off. The Gazebo is probably beyond saving.

With an enigmatic place like “The Caves”, there will always be a number of unanswered questions – how many more whimsical conceits, such as the sham archway near the larder did the Bishop and Beard build; whatever happened to the Temple, and who was really responsible for the rediscovery of the Stalactite Cave?

In concluding, I would like to express my thanks to the following people: Yvonne Sargent for giving me free rein in the grounds; Chris Richards for his assistance on the skeletons and the bringing to my attention the reference to the Oseon tablet; David Bromwich at the Taunton Local History Library, and the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society for allowing the reproduction of Buckler’s drawings.

#### NOTES

- Alexander Catcott, *A Treatise on the Deluge*, London, 1761, p. 237 (copy in Bristol Ref. Library: 149 3H 236)
- J.W. Hunt, “Banwell Leer, Deep, or Stalactite Cavern”, *Axbridge Caving Group Journal*, 1970, p. 1-4. This assessment is based on a manuscript footnote which George Bennett added to his copy of Rutter’s *Delineations* sometime between 1829 and 1834.
- George Bennett, *An Historical Account of the Parish of Banwell...* 1812 – 1834. Bennett’s MS was never published in its time and is now in private possession, but it has been reproduced in issues 4-6 of *Search*, *Journal of the Banwell Society of Archaeology*, 1964-66. Hereafter referred to as Bennett MS.
- William Phelps, *The History and Antiquities of Somersetshire*, vol. 1, (part II), 1836, p.21.
- John Rutter, *Delineations... of the County of Somerset and its Antedeluvian Bone Caverns*. London, 1829, p.147-60. Rutter reproduced this text in his *Banwell and Cheddar Guide* which appeared in the same year.
- Phelps, *op. cit.*

- Dr David Williams, transcribed copy of his letter is in the Woodspring Museum, Weston-Super-Mare.
- Bennett MS.
- John Tucker, “Banwell Bone Cave”, *Search* 19, 1983, p.7-21. The coverage in this account is very comprehensive.
- William Beard, *Visitors and Expenses Book*. Unless cited otherwise the remainder of the account is drawn from this MS volume, using Beard’s random dates where possible.
- Rutter, *op. cit.*, p.154
- Bennett MS.
- John Buckler, BM Add. MS 36379, ff.52-69, preliminary pencil drawings of Banwell. Hereafter referred to as Buckler.
- John Skinner, BM Add. MS 33703, f.92 verso.
- Buckler, f.52
- Skinner, *op. cit.*, f.73
- Buckler, ff.54,55
- Barbara Jones, *Follies & Grottoes*, London, 1953, p.124.
- John Skinner, BM Add. MS 33712, ff.159-161.
- Barbara Jones, *op. cit.*, p.124
- Buckler, f.65
- Bennett MS
- Buckler, f.56 verso
- Buckler, ff.61,63,64; John Skinner BM Add. MS 33703, ff.75,76
- T. Clark, Jr., MS Diary, entry for 13th June, 1836
- John Whereat, *Whereat’s Banwell and Cheddar Guide...* [1847], p.15. In this and a later guide to Weston-Super-Mare, [1855], Whereat still records the descent as being made by two ladders. The text is identical in both editions and is taken from Rutter, making their accuracy doubtful.
- John Skinner, BM Add. MS 33691, f.295
- T. Clark, Jr. *op. cit.*
- John Skinner, BM Add. MS 33719, f.103
- Bennett MS
- John Skinner, BM Add. MS 33691, f.303
- Bennett MS
- Buckler, ff.58,59
- Whereat, *op. cit.*, “Ornamental Cottage on Banwell Hill”.
- Buckler, ff.58,59
- Whereat, *op. cit.*, p.7. The plaque was not “in front of the Cottage” as Whereat claimed.
- Buckler, f.57
- Buckler, ff.61,63,64
- Buckler, ff.65,66
- Viator, “Roman Inscription at Banwell Cottage, Somerset”, *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, 1839, Feb. p.148-9
- Barbara Jones, *op. cit.*, p.123
- Viator, “Banwell Cottage, Somersetshire”, *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, 1837, Nov. p.466-72
- Buckler, f.66
- T. Clark, Jr. *op. cit.*
- Piggot Collection, PC 5.15, Taunton Local History Library.
- Buckler, f.69
- Buckler, f.68 verso.
- Barbara Jones, *op. cit.*, p.122
- Francis Knight, *The Sea-Board of Mendip*, 1902, p.452
- Whereat, *op. cit.*, p.16
- Knight, *op. cit.*, p.453. Knight does not quote the top line or date, only the epitaph.
- Noted in local journals; *Westonian*, Dec. 1843 & Jan, 1844; *Weston-Super-Mare Gazette*, Aug. 1855.
- Auction Particulars, 1949, Somerset R.O. DD/KW 1945/46.

## EVENTS AND OPENINGS

### THE HISTORY AND CONSERVATION OF ROCK GARDENS

A weekend course at the University of York is being held on June 15th and 16th by the Centre for the Conservation of Historic Parks and Gardens. Lectures on Saturday will be followed by field trips to Newburgh Priory, Whinfield Quarry Rock Garden and the Whirlow Brook Rock Garden. The fee of £105 includes lectures, bus trips, entrance fees and lunches, but not accommodation. Further details from Susan Schnare, 0904 433987.

### THE BATH FOLLIES TOUR

A fascinating guided tour of the architectural follies of Bath, delving into its mysteries, its former glories and the lives of its former residents. Jonathan Holt of the Folly Fellowship will guide the hunt for buildings curious and bizarre to:

BECKFORD’S TOWER: the last great folly of the eccentric megalomaniac William Beckford  
 PINCH’S FOLLY: an ornate gateway curiously juxtaposed with a block of modern flats  
 RALPH ALLEN’S SHAM CASTLE: a grand eyecatcher dominating the skyline, built by the discoverer of Bath stone  
 SIDNEY GARDENS TEMPLE: an extravagant souvenir of a forgotten pageant  
 VELLORE HOUSE GROTTTO: the recently restored grotto, mysteriously erected on the front lawn of what is now a five star hotel  
 The tour lasts three hours and is conducted by minibus on four weekend afternoons:

Saturday July 20th  
 Saturday August 3rd  
 Saturday August 17th  
 Saturday August 24th

The price of £12.50 (£10 for Folly Fellowship members) includes entrance to Beckford’s Tower museum and a discount on tea at the Bath Spa Hotel, where the tour finishes. Places strictly limited! Contact Jonathan Holt on 0272 601837 for full details.

### BIDDULPH

The restored gardens at Biddulph Grange near Stoke-on-Trent were opened by the National Trust on May 1st. Now is your chance to see this wonderful Victorian fantasy garden without trespassing: we would be interested to hear from any reader who can compare the before-and-after atmosphere of the place.

### BENINGTON LORDSHIP

James Pulham’s great sham gateway at Benington Lordship is one of the finest follies in Hertfordshire. It is also set in one of the most beautiful gardens in the county, and it is open on Wednesdays and Sundays from now until August between 2.00 and 5.00pm.

### WENTWORTH WOODHOUSE OPENING

The mausoleum at Wentworth Woodhouse in South Yorkshire, one of the eeriest buildings Gwyn Headley has ever seen, was opened to the public on Wednesday May 13th for the first time in 200 years. Admission was £1. The local land agent is Guy Canby; we hope to have more information in the next issue. Perhaps they’ll open up Hooper Stand next?

## LECHLADE

For a 3-ton statue, Old Father Thames is exceedingly mobile and has surfaced yet again. Originally a decoration for the Crystal Palace it was sold when the building was burnt down. It then spent several years at Thames Head (marking the source of the River Thames) but became heavily vandalised and thereafter moved to St. John's Lock, Lechlade. He now seems set to be resited, and "restored", in Richmond Terrace Gardens. Also to be found in the same Gardens is a grotto, as of yet unknown origin. Any information relating to this would be gratefully received. Our thanks to Brian Smith for the above items.

## SOUTH SHIELDS

Grottoes come in many shapes and forms but the one 'discovered' by Jonquil Phelan is more unusual than most. Nestled below South Shields is Marsden Bay, noted more for its spectacular eroded arch of Marsden Rock. Back in 1782, however, the "celebrated" Peter Allan, an indigenous miner, hewed fifteen apartments out of the rock which he filled up as a Public House, called (surprise, surprise) The Grotto! Although there is a steep flight of steps to the beach, access to the pub is now by a lift, a monumental chimney-like affair perched on the roof.

## BATH

Bath and its environs reflects the taste of its former residents. Many of them, such as Beckford, made the Grand Tour, and the Palladian theme abounds. The more familiar Brown's Folly stands, by a matter of a few feet, in Wiltshire but instinctively belongs to Bath. 'Faintly Italianate', it has a companion campanile tower on Lansdown Hill, which has been brought to our attention by Maurice Gould. In 1975 this tower was crumbling away with allusions to its imminent disappearance being recorded in the local paper. When visited this March, Blaine's Folly, as it is known, was still standing and looked set to do so for many years to come. What is sad is that the entrances have been bricked up, the windows broken and almost certainly, therefore, the inside is rotting away.

The tower was built in the 1880s by Sir Robert Stickney Blaine who was mayor of the city in 1872. A philanthropist, he employed 250 workmen for the building, followed by the cultivation of a nearby field. The tower changed hands with the Summerhill Park Estate, first to the reclusive millionaire Ernest Cook and then to Kingswood School.

## SUTTON COLDFIELD

With the creation of new counties the West Midlands has few follies, even lost ones. Lewis's Folly or The Tower is such an example, brought to light by member Peter Dane. It was built by a diminutive eccentric retired pawnbroker from Dudley



named Lewis and stood in Hill Village Road, Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield. Five stories high, there were the usual claims that 'on a clear day it was possible to see the Bristol Channel from the top...' Mr Lewis did not live there, however, but at the other end of Hill Village, and there is a belief that he built the Tower so that he could keep an eye on the comings and goings of his wife! Certainly she was none too pleased when he died leaving £70,000 to Dudley Guest Hospital and not to her. Sadly the Tower was demolished c.1905 at the order of the Local Authority on the grounds that it was unsafe.

## CRANBORNE

Member Kim Wills has been puzzled for years by a small tower on the Wimborne to Cranborne road in Dorset, map reference SU 045109. She writes to say she has now discovered what it is - the Philosopher's Tower, built c. 1700 as a gazebo for the third Earl of Shaftesbury, the "Philosopher Earl".

## LICHFIELD

Is there a grotto in the garden of 19 The Close, Lichfield, Staffordshire?

## BUDE

On the cliffs south of Bude is a storm tower based on the Temple of the Winds in Athens. It was built in the 1830s by Sir Thomas Dyke Acland and for some reason rebuilt in 1880. Octagonal in form, the sides are marked with the points of the compass but, according to Jeff Cousins, 90 degrees out.

## BARNSTAPLE

Tawstock Tower has miraculously reappeared after being verbally demolished by Headley & Meulenkamp, and to prove it here's Sharon McGinn's photograph. Ah well, even Homer nods.

## MITCHAM

There is an obelisk at the junction of Madeira Road and the cricket green in Mitcham, Surrey, erected in 1822 by the Rev. Richard

Cranmer to commemorate the appearance of a spring there during an extremely dry summer.

## HOLCOMBE ROGUS

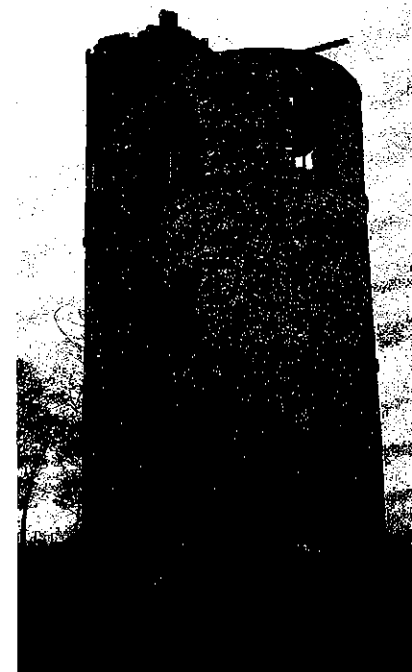
Raleigh Hancock wonders if the ruins at the top of the park at Holcombe Rogus are folly or genuine. As he says, "perhaps a case of masquerade in reverse", and there are several other examples where a ruined abbey or castle has been used to add to the romantic air!

## FANHAMS HALL

For a country where 'the Japanese influence in architecture and garden design has not been extensive', Hertfordshire does surprisingly well. For some reason the Japanese Garden of Fanhams Hall has been omitted from Follies. It was built between 1901 and 1905 when Mrs Croft brought Prof. Suzuki over from Japan for the work, following the design of Mr Inaka. Numerous exotics interspersed with bridges and stone lanterns cover the grounds, with two tea houses - Sei-Shin-tei, the "House of the Pure Heart" and the smaller Azuma Inari or "Fox Shrine". There is also an Austrian Pavilion from the 1901 exhibition and, supposedly, a Swiss chalet. The hall and grounds are owned by Sainsbury's who are still enlarging the place as a training and conference centre. Plans are now also underway to restore the Japanese houses which were deteriorating so much as to be considered dangerous, and had to be fenced off.

TAVISTOCK TOWER, BARNSTAPLE, DEVON. "NO TRACE NOW REMAINS" - HEADLEY & MEULENKAMP, 1990.

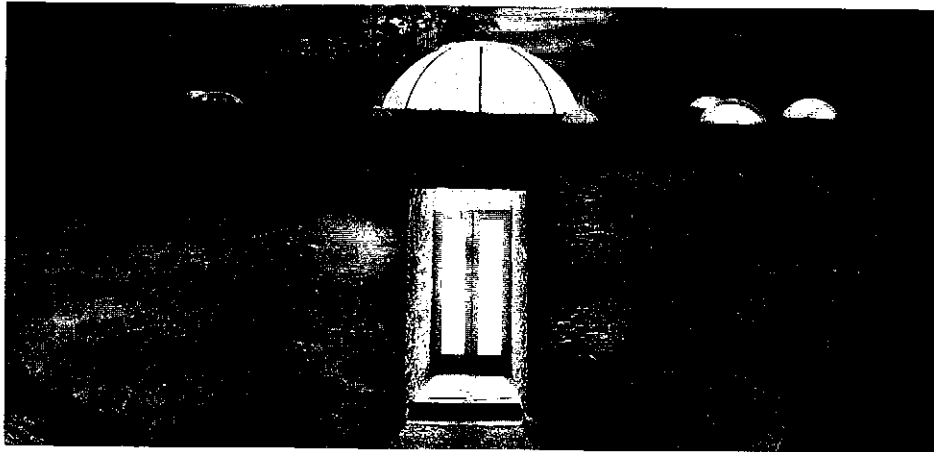
PHOTO: SHARON MCGINN, 1991



# FOR SALE

Mole Manor in Westonbirt, Gloucestershire, is one of the most unusual houses in Britain, to say the least. Built in 1986 by Yorkshire architect Arthur Quarmby, it is virtually all underground. The four bedroomed accommodation is arranged round a central atrium dominated by four Doric columns on a circular podium. Natural light comes in from a clear dome above the atrium, and the agents, John D. Wood in Malmesbury, claim that the interior of the house is brighter than most conventional homes. They also claim it is 75% cheaper to heat. What's the point of living underground unless it's cold, dark and damp, we wonder. The asking price of

MOLE MANOR, WESTONBIRT, GLOUCESTERSHIRE



£200,000 does seem excellent value for such a well-appointed house in the Cotswolds – it even has a plunge pool.

British Coal is negotiating to sell a folly at Chalfont St Giles in Buckinghamshire – The Vache. The folly is a small monument to Captain Cook, but it comes complete with a sixty bedroom house and 86 acres of parkland. Not for the faint-hearted.

Less than £200,000 will get you the most bizarre building in Devon – the Pack o'Cards pub in Combe Martin. Agents are J. Trevor – thanks to Sharon McGinn for spotting it.

On the one occasion that I visited the Japanese Gardens at Cottedred it was raining;

PHOTO: SHARON MCGINN



THE PACK O' CARDS, COMBE MARTIN, DEVON

that didn't stop me thinking that I had stepped through a magic door into another world. The eleven-and-a-half acre listed site was on the market at the beginning of this year – for millionaires only. The garden is called KORAKU EN, meaning the Garden of Good Luck and Long Life and is built in two styles, Shin (elaborate) and Gyo (intermediate) and then divided into two types, Tsuki-yama (hill garden) and the Hira-Niwa (flat garden). Besides the lakes and waterfalls are a Tea House, a guest house based on the Golden Pavilion at Kyoto, numerous bridges and shrines and many Japanese trees and plants. Oh yes, there is a split level house included in the deal as well.

## APPEAL

Jim Saunders is researching into Monuments to Nelson (and his contemporaries) and would be grateful for any information on the subject – especially those built in Scotland, and the unveiling ceremonies generally.

Jim Saunders, 15 Auckland Road, Mossley Hill, Liverpool L18 0HX

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# BOOK REVIEWS

## A Classic

**Eileen Harris assisted by Nicholas Savage, *British Architectural Books and Writers 1556-1785*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, 571pp, £85 ISBN 0 521 38551 2**

One must pay tribute to the late Rudolf Wittkower who conceived this work, and also to Dr Harris and Nicholas Savage for ensuring it reached completion and publication. Not only have the libraries and record offices of this country been scoured for the material cited but many from America and Canada – a monumental and daunting task. Whereas John Harris explored the works covering views and guides of country houses, this book examines the works of the 'Architectural Writer'. A precise history on each writer precedes a catalogue of their works. The coverage is exhaustive. Familiar names such as Halfpenny & Morris occupy their respective places amongst the more grandiose Adams and Palladios of this world and the gamut of Betty Langley's architectural writings and criticisms is detailed in full – the list goes on. Various plates are reproduced, deserving more page space, and the bibliography is preceded by eight introductory essays covering the Orders through to the much neglected aspect of Publishers and Booksellers.

Undoubtedly a copy will take its rightful place next to Howard Colvin's *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects* on my shelves. If you want to borrow this one, join the queue. I waited two months for the British Lending Library's copy. A must if you can afford it! MGC

## Cool Pricing

**Sylvia Beamon & Susan Roaf, *The Ice-Houses of Britain*, Routledge, London 1990, 553pp, £100**

ISBN 0 415 03301 2

It is difficult to judge such a book when there is no bench-mark to compare it with. It must, therefore, act as the present reference work on the subject, a title well earned.

In two sections, Part I is a history of ice-houses, covering such aspects as types, position, construction and how they were used. Their importance was amply demonstrated by the fact that even pattern books ventured to include designs for them. The most useful aspect of Ice-houses is, however, the gazetteer, occupying a whole two-thirds of the book. So, when planning a folly hunt, why not include the odd ice-house, a number of which do venture into follydom – Buckland House and Wardour Castle are frequently cited examples.

Unfortunately, my reading was continuously disrupted by decorating, and what niggles I do have must be personal – I prefer references to be included on the same page on which they are cited and only one mistake was spotted (p.5). The sensible use of line drawings makes up for

the rather poor reproduction of the black and white photographs.

In 1981 the published price of *Ice-Houses* was expected to be in the region of £12.50. Nine years, and various changes in publisher later, the price tag is the obvious thing which will ensure this intrepid tome never reaches too many bookshelves (I succumbed and bought a copy even though it comes without a dust jacket). Well worth borrowing from your library. MGC

## No Ha-Has

**Michael Symes, *The English Rococo Garden: Shire Garden History*, Shire Publications, Princes Risborough 1991, 72pp. £4.95**

ISBN 0 7478 0129 0

**John Anthony, *The Renaissance Garden in Britain: Shire Garden History*, Shire Publications, Princes Risborough 1991, 96pp. £4.95**

ISBN 0 7478 0130 4

There was once a very popular (among students) series of books called "The Bluffer's Guide To..." (insert chosen subject here). Yes, they were intended to amuse, but in so doing they educated as well – one couldn't help acquiring a little bit of knowledge about the subject. These handsome Shire Garden History paperbacks fulfil a fairly similar function, compressing four hundred years of garden history into less than a hundred well-illustrated pages, but something has to be left out. In this case it's the amusement. Symes uses up too much of his scant allowance of space struggling to define a rococo garden when perhaps he should have illustrated through example; Anthony's book is, aptly, more ordered and accessible, benefiting like a number of recent garden books from Triggs' elegant turn of the century garden plans. Symes skilfully cites the ogee arch as the wedding ring between rococo and Gothick, and wins us over with his evident affection for the subject. These may be slim volumes, but that only makes them more suitable to feed an awakening interest. Very highly recommended. LRGH

## I started to sculpt on the death of my duck

**Claude Arz, *Le Guide de la France Insolite*, Hachette, Paris 1990, 155pp. FF128.**

ISBN 24 1451 4 -90V

**Michel Racine, *Le Guide des Jardins de France*, Hachette, Paris 1990, 350pp, FF210.**

ISBN 24 1452 2 -90V

The publication of two guides by Hachette opens up two different, but complementary sides of France for the folly-hunter. They may rarely mention the word "folly" but their pages are littered with a considerable amount of curiosities to excite our interest.

"*Le guide de la France Insolite*" is written by the son of a Breton healer, a qualification which has given him a head start in the appreciation of all things odd. The book is a collection of the hundred most extraordinary places in France – museums of the imagination, castles black with alchemy, artistic and utopian villages and gardens of Art Brut.

It leaves one with the false impression that France is a bodgers' paradise, a nation of the biggest accumulators of junk. It seems to have a liberal sprinkling of museums of multifarious objects, lacking artistic worth and gardens with constructions made with throwaway rubbish whose inspiration is very pedestrian.

"I started to sculpt on the death of my duck" says Emile Taugourdeau, creator of the Zoological Garden of Thorée-les-Pins. Well, that, as every Frenchman should know, is his "liberté".

Whether such gardens contain individual items which are definable as follies or they are follies in their entirety is a question for the Great Folly Debate. Why shouldn't piles of bottles stand next to Temples of Venus in the folly canon? After all, Headley and Meulenkamp encourage the builders or discoverers of the former constructions to report to them.

Arz proposes the origin of follies as early as the time of the Crusades at Hesdin in Northern France where Robert of Artois, companion of King Louis IX, laid out a garden inspired by the Orient, comprising water games, mirrors which deformed the image, automata which sprinkled flour over the visitors, as well as arabesque follies.

No vestiges of the site remain to prove his theory but Arz does resurrect a few odd creators in the book's best trick: posthumous interviews with men like L'Abbe Fouré who sculpted hundreds of grimacing heads in the coastal rock of Brittany in commemoration of the Rothéneuf family. He was motivated "to show to his faithful the damage of hatred, jealousy, pillage and turpitude".

Such inspiration was rarely the reason for the creations in "*Le Guide des Jardins de France*". The jackets of the two soft bound books complement each other in style but they are spiritually as far apart as Beauty and the Beast.

The author is Michel Racine, founder of ARPEJ: the Association pour l'Art des Paysages et des Jardins, a group of enthusiasts not dissimilar in their aims from those of the Folly Fellowship. An architect, he has an eye for the folly with many such as La Pagode de Chanteloup appearing in full glorious colour.

He has enlisted the support of over fifty contributors to write short pieces on each site. Indeed the book is very much a group effort, with three further authors writing longer treatises on "*The Little Aide-Memoire of the Post-Modern Gardener*", "*The Gardener-Man*" and "*Being the Owner of a Garden Open to the Public*".

The book also benefits from maps and plans although some of these have been printed too small to read easily. Furthermore, like its smaller companion volume, this bulky guide has lots of useful information such as the address, telephone number, opening hours and directions to each of the 550 sites.

Bravo Hachette! I'm booking my appointment with the ghost at La Forteresse Hantée in the Auvergne.

# LETTERS

I would like to thank the many people who have replied to my queries in issues 7 & 8, and sent in dozens of references for fictional Follies. If anything, the response shows our readers to be a fairly well-read lot with a marked tendency for the off-beat and/or the plain silly in literature. With the vast amounts of new material now collected it will only take me two years or so to read all the b\*\*\*\*y books and start writing. Keep sending those titles in! And again, thanks for all the co-operation.

Wim Meulenkamp  
Troelstralaan 80  
3515 CL Utrecht  
Netherlands

During the course of many holidays spent photographing N.T. properties we became interested in the follies belonging to the Trust, and then went hunting for others, originally with the help of the very helpful Shire booklet.

In Headley & Meulenkamp's Follies I am afraid Birmingham came off very badly, and rightly so. The gigantic folly here is the wholesale destruction of so much valuable historical material. But I would like to tell you about one folly that seems to have escaped notice.

A year or so ago (perhaps longer - time flies!) Clarkes the builders acquired the house and grounds belonging to the late American Professor Philip Sargeant Florence of Birmingham University. We heard that there was a folly in the grounds and before building began we were able to go one morning and photograph it.

Professor Florence, we understand, was a Professor at Birmingham University in 1929. I rather think the folly started life as a garden building, "to animate the landscape"! It appears that at the turn of the century Birmingham Cathedral had some restoration work done and the folly was built from surplus building material from that operation. It is beautifully situated by the side of a small pool and must have added to the view from the house considerably. We are so truly glad it is still there, we feared that when building took place it might have been demolished.

Now the original house has been pulled down and the site developed - very tastefully - and fortunately the folly is intact, but very exclusive and can only be enjoyed by the owners of the houses. It is worth a visit, though whether the owners of the houses would enjoy any publicity about it, I rather doubt. It is in Sherbourne Close, off Selly Park Road.

Incidentally, we have an illustrated talk of about 120 slides showing a very mixed assortment of follies, eyecatchers and oddities of interest possibly to small groups around Birmingham.

Margaret Ford  
57 Ollerton Road  
Yardley  
Birmingham  
West Midlands B26 1PP

I am trying to get a measure of the number of surviving rustic buildings in this part of the country where the wooden facings are set on a bed of moss.

I suspect there are many more surviving than at first one might think, but close examination is of course essential in order to find the remains of moss in joints. Do any of your members know of any follies so constructed?

John H. Winstone BSc B Arch RIBA  
Hex House  
Front Street  
Churchill  
Bristol BS9 5LZ



Information please, about the curious tower right next to the west side of the M40 extension, between junctions 9 and 10.

May A. Woods  
29 Ranelagh Avenue  
London SW6 3PJ

I thought you might like to know of the Tower in Tenterden, Kent - probably not a folly, but worth a glance as you pass by as it's right on the A28 at the north of the High Street, and gains in incongruity by being dark and ivy-covered and tacked onto an immaculate white house, in a street of very tidy houses. It actually looks more dramatic from the end, where the castellations are more apparent. It is occupied separately from the main house, but shares a room with it. It was on sale for £90,000 four years ago. Only a trifle, but more worthy of attention than the Rolvenden gnome garden which must be just one of many such tasteless gardens. They even take them in in winter, so any devoted folly seekers could well be thwarted if determined to find it!

I've just returned from a holiday in Ireland, and an article on Irish follies will follow shortly.

Alan Terrill  
Chapel House  
Ashford Road  
High Haldden  
Kent



This photo is of a folly within one mile of us in Devon and so far I think unlisted. It is on the same road as Sladnor Park but about four miles away, and in no way related. It is on the A379 at Sladnor. The history is: Just after World War I William Honeyard, the famous maker of Liquafuta cough mixture, came to live in Shaldon. The folly was built in their garden as a kitchen for his wife, so that while enjoying her gardening she could make her afternoon tea in it without going home! Upon her death it was given along with the gardens to the local council as a public park. The kitchen is slowly being left to fall into decay and has now totally lost its roof. As you can see it is a lovely building whether folly, gazebo or kitchen.

I have also enclosed a cutting from the 'Western Morning News', April 4th 1991, regarding the 'castle' in the grounds of Mamhead House. ['The building now provides 8,514 sq.ft. of character office accommodation in the grounds of Mamhead and offering easy access to the M5.']

The advert so upset me that it has taken me over half an hour to find it just to send it to you. I had thrown it with disgust to the bottom of my recyclable paper pile!

Also enclosed is an update on Haldon Belvedere near Exeter from the Western Morning News dated April 13th 1991. We walk the dog and kids regularly near this folly and it breaks my heart to see it falling in to such disrepair.

I have an old newspaper cutting which described the interior in great detail and I will try to get round to getting it typed out. You may find it interesting for the files.

Sharon McGinn  
'Rowancroft'  
Alendale Close  
Teignmouth  
Devon TQ14 8NY

Tantara Lodge, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire is for sale. I think I sent you a scrappy sketch. It is an early 19th century "monastic" gatehouse.

Knight, Frank & Rutley's Stratford office are handling the sale, no brochure but the asking price is £70,000 with a big garden. Question - Does the whole of Witley Court, Worcestershire, now count as a folly - it is certainly a romantic ruin and was built both for pleasure and to impress. Very much enjoyed the latest magazine.

Barbara Hague  
"Brookview"  
Millburn Grange  
Coventry Road  
Kenilworth  
Warwickshire CV8 2FE

## THE GARDEN PARTY

The Secretary of the Folly Fellowship requests the pleasure of your company at a Garden Party on Sunday, July 21st 1991 at 3.00pm at Shugborough, Staffordshire by kind permission of Staffordshire County Council and the National Trust

Guest of Honour:  
Patrick, Earl of Lichfield  
Members £6.00, guests £8.50 (plus NT admission charge) Further details from Woodstock House, Winterhill Way, Burpham, Surrey, GU4 7JX

## MEMBERSHIP

To: The Folly Fellowship  
21 Beacon Road  
Ware  
Hertfordshire  
SG12 7HY

I wish to become a member of the Folly Fellowship. I enclose my annual subscription of £12.50 (\$35 overseas) which in addition to benefits far too numerous to list here, will entitle me to four editions of FOLLIES, the magazine of the Folly Fellowship.

NAME.....

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