

**AZEMIA
A NEW EDITION**



Robert J. Gemmett has produced the first scholarly edition of William Beckford's *Azemia*. The novel was first published in 1797, under the pseudonym Jacquetta Agneta Mariana Jenks.

As well as ridiculing the sensational and sentimental novels of his day, Beckford also makes a biting political attack on the Tory party and its leader, William Pitt the Younger, for the war with France, repressive legislation and neglect of the poor.

With a 42 page introduction and copious annotations, this volume continues Professor Gemmett's important contribution to Beckford studies which began with his edition of *Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters* (1969).

Azemia is published by Valancourt Books, Kansas City, MO. ISBN 1-932555-66-5. 274pp. \$24.95.

GEORGIAN NEWSPAPER PROJECT
www.bathnes.gov.uk

Volunteers have been compiling a database of abstracts and references to articles in the *Bath Chronicle* (1770-1800). So far seventeen years have been covered which include some 27 records relating to the Beckford family.

As one might expect, there are references to births (Margaret and Susan) and deaths (Lady Margaret and Mrs Beckford). There are also fascinating entries under the heading Crime.

6 Aug 1789 - Salisbury Assizes – action by William Beckford of Fonthill against Rev John Nairne of Hindon for shooting at swans, geese & ducks nr Fonthill House. Verdict for plaintiff with £10 damages.

18 Jul 1799 – W M Clark (who stabbed himself in boxes of Drury Lane Theatre) was committed to Tothill Fields on Thu on charge of defrauding £600 from Mr Beckford of Fonthill (from whose service he absconded).

The Beckford Newsletter
is edited by
Sidney Blackmore
The Timber Cottage
Crockerton, Warminster
Wiltshire BA12 8AX - UK
Sidney.Blackmore@btinternet.com
Items of Beckfordian interest
are always welcome

**THE BECKFORD NEWSLETTER
AN OCASIONAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE BECKFORD SOCIETY**

ISSUE NO 32 – MARCH 2010

THE 250th ANNIVERSARY OF WILLIAM BECKFORD'S BIRTH



Born 29 September 1760

'the deep-rooted affection I bore to Fonthill, the happy scene of my childhood and the place of my nativity'. *Portuguese Journal*, 1787.

'I was born at Fonthill and cannot help being a little surpriz'd that amidst such an infinity of knowledge, you should happen to be ignorant of that all important circumstance'. To John Britton, 31 Dec 1840.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - SATURDAY 12 JUNE 2010

**ROYAL LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTION
QUEEN SQUARE, BATH**

Business Session - 11.30am

Lecture - 2.00pm
MIN WOOD

'Landscape as biography: William Beckford and the grounds of Fonthill Abbey'.

See page 3 and enclosed agenda and booking form

IN COMMEMORATION OF ALDERMAN BECKFORD



Dr Perry Gauci gave the 2009 Beckford Lecture on 19 November at the Travellers Club in London when he discussed 'Alderman Beckford and the Imperial Metropolis'.

Afterwards some twenty-nine members attended the annual Beckford Dinner. We are very grateful to Dr Gauci for a fascinating lecture that members will be able to read when the next Beckford Lectures volume is published.

Alderman Beckford was twice Lord Mayor of London and his monument was the first to be erected in the Guildhall. To commemorate the tercentenary of his birth, the City of London Corporation held at lecture at the Guildhall on 25 February when Professor Jeremy Black, Professor of History at the University of Exeter, lectured on 'London in the age of Alderman Beckford'.

THE VENETO: AN EXCURSION

We are sorry that we have had to cancel our proposed trip to the *Veneto in the footsteps of Beckford* which was to take place from 31 May – 4 June.

Although we had some bookings for this tour, there were insufficient to make the trip viable.

We know that those who booked are disappointed about this, but we hope that it will be possible to run this excursion in the future.

Meanwhile, do let the Secretary know if you have any ideas for trips which might appeal to Society members.

BECKFORD IN FICTION

A. S. Byatt's novel *The Children's Book* (2009) has been described as 'a staggeringly detailed and charged recreation of the period between the end of the 19th century and the first world war'. In it a curator at the V&A says "Those dear lady, are, as it were, my touchstone collection of fakes... This nautilus is not a Cellini, though William Beckford was led to believe it was, and paid a small fortune for it".

AGM 2010

This year's AGM will be held in Bath at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution on Saturday 12 June. An agenda and booking form is enclosed.

In the afternoon, Min Wood will lecture on 'Landscape as biography: William Beckford and the grounds of Fonthill Abbey'.

On the following day, Sunday 13 June we will celebrate William Beckford's 250th birthday with an afternoon garden party in Lansdown Place East close to Beckford's houses in Lansdown Crescent. We very much hope that it will be possible to arrange visits for members to see Beckford's splendid library at 19 Lansdown Crescent during the afternoon. A booking form for the garden party is enclosed.

BECKFORD LECTURE 2010

We are delighted that Prof Peter Sabor will give the 2010 Beckford Lecture on Thursday 4 November at the Travellers Club in London.

Professor Sabor holds the Canada Research Chair in Eighteenth-Century Literature and is Director of the Burney Centre at McGill University. He has edited works by Samuel Richardson, Sara Fielding, Horace Walpole and Jane Austen. He is author of *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney* and general editor of the six-volume edition of her Court

Journals, and co-general editor of a twenty-five volume edition of Samuel Richardson's Works and Correspondence.

THE BECKFORD JOURNAL 2010

We are overwhelmed by the generosity of members in responding to our appeal for contributions towards the cost of printing this year's Journal.

This additional funding will enable us to produce a very special issue in this year which commemorates the 250th anniversary of William Beckford's birth

BECKFORD'S TOWER

Beckford's Tower is mounting a special exhibition to commemorate William Beckford's 250th birthday. *William Beckford: The Sultan of Lansdown* will run from 12 June until 31 October.

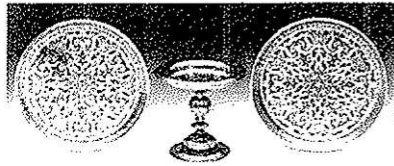
A programme of lectures is being held at the tower.

The Alderman and Adam. Dr Amy Frost reveals new research into the ill-fated mansion at Witham in Somerset designed for Alderman Beckford by Robert Adam Wednesday 14 April 18.00-19.00. Tickets £5.

Beckford's Architect's: Soane. The first in a series of lectures in which Dr Amy Frost explores William Beckford's relationship with his architects. Wednesday 12 May. 18.00-19.00. Tickets £5.

SALE OF SILVER AND PICTURES FROM THE FONTHILL OLD ABBEY ESTATE

A pair of spectacular silver-gilt salvers from William Beckford's collection were sold by Woolley & Wallis in Salisbury on 27 January for £36,000.



The Burwash salvers and tazza

The pieces decorated with chasing and engraving in a radiating design of interlaced Renaissance strap work and cartouches of fruit were made by William Burwash (1817). The undersides are engraved with Beckford's two crests. In the same sale was a silver-gilt tazza (height 11cm) also by William Burwash (1817), the underside inscribed 'Fonthill Abbey'. This sold for £2,600.

These items were part of 65 lots of silver from the estate of Niel Rimington owner of the Fonthill Old Abbey estate who died last year.



The Beckford and Hamilton crests

Pictures from the Rimington estate, to be sold on 24 March, include a watercolour view of Fonthill Abbey by T. Higham dated July 24 1822, and an Italianate landscape by a follower of Nicholas de Taunay which was once in Beckford's collection and sold at the Hamilton Palace sale in 1882. Sèvres porcelain also from Mr Rimington's estate is included in a sale of English and European ceramics and glass on 13 April.



T Higham, *Fonthill Abbey*, 1822

Woolley & Wallis, 51- 61 Castle Street, Salisbury SP1 3SU.
www.woolleyandwallis.co.uk

SOME BECKFORD REFERENCES

Robert Moody, *Mr Bennett of Wiltshire: the life of a county Member of Parliament 1773-1852*. East Knoyle: Hobnob Press, 2005 ISBN 0-946418-40-3.

A biography of John Bennett, Member of Parliament and Wiltshire landowner who in December 1825 entered into contracts to purchase the Fonthill Abbey estate from John Farquhar. Reference is made to the work undertaken by the Salisbury architect Peniston to sell building materials from the abbey ruins. Bennett, by then seriously in debt, sold the estate in 1845 to Richard, Earl Grosvenor. Recorded in the inventory made after Bennett's death was a model of Fonthill Abbey.

John Payne, *The West Country: A Cultural History*. Oxford: Signal Books.
ISBN 1-904955-61-4

This volume in the 'Landscapes of the Imagination' series has a brief account of Beckford 'one of the great mavericks of that turbulent turn of the century'. Lansdown Tower 'is a place to be visited in a winter gale - a secure port in any storm, and there were plenty of storms and few ports in Beckford's long life'. (pp 135-6).

Noël Riley, *Penwork: a Decorative Phenomenon*. Wetherby: Oblong, 2008.
ISBN 978-0-9556576-0-3

A well-illustrated survey of penwork the decorative technique very popular between 1815-1850. One of the decorated boxes illustrated in the book has a view of Fonthill Abbey, 'one of several examples showing a view of that icon of the gothic revival'. Figure 110 (page 85), and p.86.

David Stancliffe, *The Lion Companion to Church Architecture*. Oxford: Lion, 2008.
ISBN 978 0 7459 5190 4

The Bishop of Salisbury's exploration of church architecture throughout the centuries includes, in his discussion of the work of James Wyatt, an illustration of Fonthill Abbey 'the most megalomaniacal of his original schemes ... he built a cluster of transepts radiating around an enormous tall central octagon in the middle of Wiltshire'. p. 222

Richard Dewhurst, *The Church in Hindon*. Hindon: Hindon Publishing, 2000.
ISBN 0 9531586 2 4.

A short history of the church in Hindon, includes a few references to the patronage of the Beckfords. The curate in 1783 in replying to the bishop's visitation questionnaire stated that 'There is a free school endowed by William Beckford Esq ... It is supported by Mr Beckford's contribution alone for boys and girls'. (p. 35). One of Hindon church's bells, a tenor A flat, weighing 9ewt is inscribed 'Five bells cast into six w. additional metal at the expense of William Beckford and Bisse Richard, Esq' A.R. 1754.' (p.57)

Robert Moody, *The Life and Letters of William Lisle Bowles: Poet and Parson 1762-1850*, East Knoyle: The Hobnob Press, 2009. ISBN 978-1-906978-02-0

A biography of William Lisle Bowles, Wiltshire parson and poet whose *Fourteen Sonnets, Elegiac and Descriptive* influenced the Romantic poets. He was appointed as curate in 1788 by Dr Charles Wake, rector of East Knoyle and Fonthill Bishop. Bowles visited the Fonthill Abbey view on 21 August 1822 and wrote a poem about his experience which was published a few days later in both the Salisbury and Devizes papers. He later wrote that he had 'been on a "Fools' errand"', like many others to the sale at Fonthill". He was highly critical of Fonthill when asked by John Britton to subscribe to his book on the abbey. 'I shall be happy to subscribe to Britton's account of Fonthill Abbey tho I do not think it worth describing ... the line

day wonder is over ...at best a congeries of absurdity combining a Palace, a Cathedral & a shop of trinkets! ...' (pp.148-149)

William Kuhn, *The Politics of Pleasure: A Portrait of Benjamin Disraeli*. Free Press, 2006. ISBN 0743256875.

A study of Benjamin Disraeli which pays attention to Disraeli the writer, to show how his novels were the memoirs he never wrote. Beckford's influence on Disraeli (pp 114-115); on *Contarini Fleming* (p130, 143-135) *Vathek's* influence on *Aloy* (p 138), and Disraeli's homage to *Vathek* (p.140)

Robert J. Gemmett, 'The old palace of tertian fevers'. The Fonthill sale of 1807. *Journal of the History of Collections*, 2010.
Available on line as an advance access article.

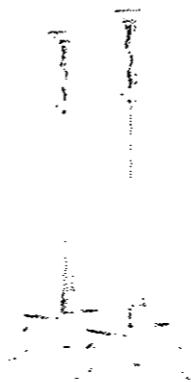
Examines the Fonthill sale of 1807 occasioned by Beckford's decision to dismantle his father's mansion. It considers the public interest in the sale and sheds light on the items offered and the buyers.

JOURNAL IN PORTUGAL AND SPAIN

Boyd Alexander's edition of *The Journal of William Beckford in Portugal and Spain 1787-1788*, was first published in a Portuguese translation by João Gaspar Simões in 1957. This has recently been re-issued by the National Library of Portugal. Lisbon: Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, 2009. 230 pp. ISBN 9789725654293. E15.

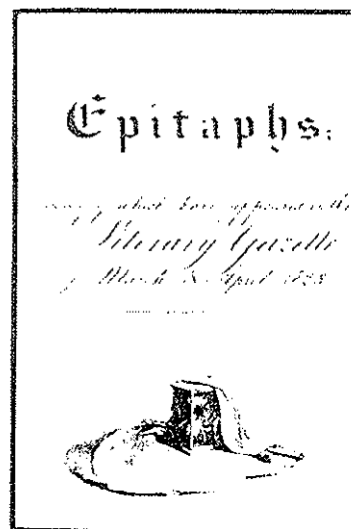
THE BECKFORD HAMILTON CANDLESTICKS

A fabulous pair of George III silver-gilt candlesticks based on a Roman 1st Century bronze lamp stand were sold at Christie's in London on 17 November for £91,250.



The silver-gilt candlesticks on lizard feet were made by Charles Aldridge (1787) and are likely to have been a direct commission from William Beckford. Their inspiration being a Roman lamp stand from Herculaneum which was sold to the British Museum by Sir William Hamilton in 1772. Beckford owned two pairs of these candlesticks which at the time of the 1823 Fonthill sale were located in the Grand Drawing Room.

BECKFORD'S EPITAPHS



Eleven epitaphs by William Beckford said to have been collected in 'my rambles about in this neighbourhood' were first printed in the *Literary Gazette* 1823 under the pseudonym 'Viator'. The introductory letter to the editor was dated Bath October 1822

These have now been reprinted in *The Sieneese Shredder* No 3 (2009) a New York-based annual journal devoted to art, literature, design, music and poetry.

ISBN 9780978710828

VENANZIO RAUZZINI 1746-1810



Venanzio Rauzzini was an Italian castrato, who so impressed Mozart that he wrote his opera *Lucio Sullà* especially for him. He eventually moved to Bath where from 1781 he took charge of organising concerts. He also arranged the music for William Beckford's coming of age party and specially composed a pastoral cantata *Il Tributo* sung by Pacchierotti and Tenducci. Beckford was to write to Lady Hamilton that the singers 'sung like superior beings in a little opera composed upon the occasion; that Burton played like one possessed, and all the world danced like demoniacs'.

Rauzzini died in 1810 and there is a memorial to him in Bath Abbey, which will be the setting for a concert on 15 April at 8.00pm entitled *The Castrato Voice* with the Bath Philharmonia and the Moldovan male soprano Radu Marian.