

THE LIBRARY AT NIGHT

'My books hold between their covers every story I've ever known and still remember, or have now forgotten, or may one day read; they fill the space around me with ancient and new voices. No doubt these stories exist on the page equally during the day but, perhaps because of nighttime's acquaintance with phantom appearances and telltale dreams, they become more vividly present after the sun has set. I walk down the aisles glimpsing the works of Voltaire and hear in the dark the oriental fable of *Zadig*; somewhere in the distance William Beckford's *Vathek* picks up the tread of the story and hands it over to Salman Rushdie's clowns behind the blue covers of *The Satanic Verses ...*'

From Alberto Manguel's *The Library at Night* (Yale University Press, 2008) his meditation on the meaning and mysteries of libraries throughout history. *Vathek* is included in his list of non-canonical favourite books.

Southwards to Geneva

Bookshop browsing often turns up books which make reference to William Beckford. A recent find in an Oxford shop was Mavis Coulson's *Southwards to Geneva: 200 Years of English Travellers*, Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1988.

Beckford makes a first appearance in the chapter on Voltaire 'The Sage of Ferney', which also discusses his friendship with Jan Huber.

This attractively illustrated volume lacks an index, but Beckford is to be found on pp 45-47, 106, 111, 118, 120-124. The artists John Robert Cozens and Francis Danby also make appearances among the English travellers.

This Newsletter is edited by
Sidney Blackmore
The Timber Cottage
Crockerton
Warminster
Wiltshire BA12 8AX - UK

Sidney.Blackmore@btinternet.com



THE BECKFORD
NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO 34 - APRIL 2011

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
SATURDAY 11 JUNE 2011

STRAWBERRY HILL HOUSE, MIDDLESEX



SEE INSIDE AND ENCLOSED AGENDA & BOOKING FORM

PRINCESS ANTOINETTE OF MONACO

Princess Antoinette of Monaco, a direct descendant of William Beckford, died on 18 March 2011, aged 90. She was the older sister of Prince Rainier III (1949-2005), and they are descended from Beckford's younger daughter, Susan Euphemia (1786-1859). From Susan the line can be traced to her son William, 11th Duke of Hamilton (1811-1863), and his daughter Mary (1850-1922) who married Albert I, Prince of Monaco (1899-1922). Their son, Louis II (1870-1949) produced no legitimate heir, but by Marie Juliette Louvert (1867-1930) he had a daughter, Charlotte Hereditary Princess of Monaco (1898-1977). Her children were Antoinette and Rainier. Princess Antoinette was married three times, her third husband dying after six weeks. She had three children, two of whom survive her, and she devoted much of her life to an animal sanctuary caring mainly for cats and dogs.

RUNDELL NOT BECKFORD

Stroud Auctions offered, in a sale on 10 March, a lot described as 'Marble bust of William Beckford by William Grinsell Nichol (1796-1871)' the bust had been purchased from a London gallery by the vendor in 1994.

The bust bears a strong likeness to the death bed portrait of Beckford by Willes Maddox, but the new owner has identified it as being a version of the bust by Nichol of the silversmith Philip Rundell (1746-1827). Another version is in the V&A. Rundell created the most important and successful silver business of his age, and died a millionaire

BOOKS FROM BECKFORD'S COLLECTION IN THE BRITISH LIBRARY

A series of fascinating essays on the origins of the British Library's printed collections is contained within the pages of *Libraries within the Library* edited by Giles Mandelbrote and Barry Taylor.

Arnold Hunt considers books once owned by William Beckford (pp 382-4) as one of the case studies in his essay which researches provenance through invoices of library purchases. He also provides a list of books with Beckford's annotations now in the British Library's collection (pp 382-4).

Giles Mandelbrote and Barry Taylor *LIBRARIES WITHIN THE LIBRARY: The origins of the British Library's printed collections.* London, British Library, 2010.

AGM 2011

This year's AGM will be held at Strawberry Hill on Saturday 11 June.

This will be a wonderful opportunity for members to see the marvellous and miraculous restoration work which has taken place since our last visit in 2007. Our earlier visit revealed just how fragile and precarious Walpole's 'little castle' was. Since then, through extensive research and painstaking craftsmanship, Walpole's house has been brought back to life. Walpole wrote, in May 1763, that 'Guilders, carvers ... are labouring'. This is just what has happened again over recent years.

Our day will begin with a private tour of the house, and end with talks by Amy Frost of the Beckford Tower Trust and Nick Smith of Strawberry Hill on Empty Rooms: showing and re-creating an historic interior.

Agenda and booking form enclosed.

BECKFORD LECTURE AND DINNER 2011

We are delighted that Professor Jeremy Black, Professor of History at Exeter University, will give this year's Beckford Lecture on The Grand Tour: the Context for William Beckford.

The Lecture will be held on Thursday 17 November at the Travellers Club in London. Our tenth Beckford Dinner will take place after the lecture.

Further information will be circulated in early September.

BECKFORD'S COFFER AND STAND

An oak coffer and stand, one of a set of four made for Beckford's Tower, appeared at auction last autumn. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport has placed a temporary export ban to prevent it being sold overseas and the Beckford Tower Trust is campaigning to raise £285,000 to purchase it.

An appeal leaflet is enclosed with this Newsletter. Please do support this opportunity to return this important piece of Beckford's furniture to the tower for which it was designed.