

LATIMER CROSS ROUNDELS

The Latimer Cross, illustrating William Beckford's descent from William, Lord Latimer of Corby (d.1302) was one of William Beckford's favourite heraldic emblems. He used it in decorative schemes at Fonthill, on silver and porcelain, and on spines of books. Storer in his *Description...* (1812) describes the main door to the abbey. 'On the top of the pediment is a niche, containing a statue of St Anthony of Padua, surmounted by a cross-flory, the arms of William the first Lord Latimer ...'

The furniture specialist Paul Shutler believes that two gilded pine roundels showing the Latimer Cross – within Gothic quatrefoils with



rays of light/sunburst – may well have been made for Fonthill Abbey, possibly for doors in the Lancaster Gallery. The Gothic quatrefoil was a favourite device used by both Beckford and Wyatt. The roundels are 24cm in diameter of water gilded pine, with a deep red or crimson painted ring and sgraffito decoration. The backs are painted in a bright blue size or wash. Both colours favoured by Beckford in his interior schemes using crimson, scarlet and red with contrasting purple and blue.

Paul Shutler would be very glad to hear from anyone who might be able to suggest any documentary sources which might throw light on the roundels.

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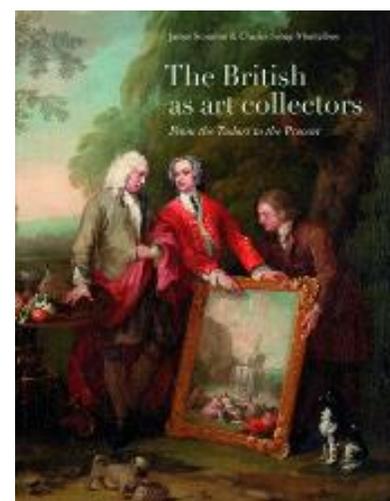
Items of Beckfordian interest are always welcome.

THE BECKFORD NEWSLETTER



NO 39 - SEPTEMBER 2013

THE BECKFORD LECTURE



THE BRITISH AS ART COLLECTORS

CHARLES SEBAG-MONTEFIORE

TUESDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2013

AT 6.30 PM

THE TRAVELLERS CLUB
106 PALL MALL, LONDON SW1

TO BE FOLLOWED BY DINNER

DRINKS WILL BE SERVED FROM 6.00 PM

AT AUCTION



Recent months have seen some spectacular pieces once owned by William Beckford and his son-in-law the Duke of Hamilton pass through the auction room. A pair of late Louis XV ormolu-mounted 'Clair de lune' porcelain vases, the mounts attributed to Jean-Claude Chambellan Duplessis fetched £421,875 at Christie's, London, on 4 July.

A Japanese lacquer chest, dating from the 1630s, once in the collection of Cardinal Mazarin, chief minister of France, has been acquired by the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam for 7.3 million euros at a sale in France on 9 June. It had long been assumed the chest had been lost in London during the Second World War, but was recently discovered in a house in the Loire Valley having been used as a drinks cabinet and TV stand



The chest was one of two owned by Cardinal Mazarin, the other (smaller) example is in the V&A. Both were in the Hamilton collection, the smaller having been at Fonthill.

Twelve lots of Beckford interest appeared at Bonhams, New York on 25 June, when the library of Stuart and Caroline Schimmel was sold. A letter (lot 3006) from Beckford to a bookseller, possibly Henry Bohn, written in the last weeks of his life, made \$2,375. Other lots included books with his annotations. A copy of *Italy...* (1834) once belonging to his granddaughter, Susan, Countess of Lincoln, inscribed 'from the author' made \$3,500. (lot 3004).

A mid 18th¹-century diamond and enamel memorial ring with the inscription 'Balshua (sic) Beckford OB 6 Jan 1750 AE 68' was sold at Bonhams, Oxford on 16 July. Bathshua Beckford was Alderman Beckford's mother.

RECENT BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Constanze Baum, 'Ruined Waking Thoughts: William Beckford as a Visitor to Pompeii', in *Pompeii in the Public Imagination: From its Rediscovery to Today*, ed. Shelley Hales & Joanna Paul, OUP, 2011. pp. 34-47.

Robert Cavaliero, *Ottomania: The Romantics and the Myth of the Islamic Orient*. Tauris, 2013. *Vathek* is considered pp. 56-61.

Laurent Châtel, '“One Must Become Half-Catholic”': William Beckford (1760-1844) as "Impolite and Uncommercial" Aesthete", in *Marketing Art in the British Isles, 1700 to present*, ed. Charlotte Gould & Sophie Mesplède. Ashgate, 2012. pp. 195 – 210.

Laurent Châtel, 'William Beckford et les *Mille et une Nuits*: suite de Contes arabes, *Vathek* et les *Episodes*', in *Les Mille et une Nuits*. Paris: Hazan, 2012. pp. 127-9. An essay in the catalogue of an exhibition at l'Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris.

Laurent Châtel, 'William Beckford and the East: Transmission, Translation and Continuation of the *Arabian Nights*', in *Sheheherazade's Children – Global Encounters with the Arabian Nights*, ed.

Mariana Warner & Philip Kennedy. New York: New York University Press, 2013. pp. 53-69.

Robin Jarvis, 'William Beckford: Travel Writer, Travel Reader', *Review of English Studies*, 2013 (on-line version).

Karen Junod, *Writing the Lives of Painters: Biography and Artistic Identity in Britain 1760-1810*. OUP, 2011. Ch.3 'William Beckford's Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters (1786)', pp. 80-109.

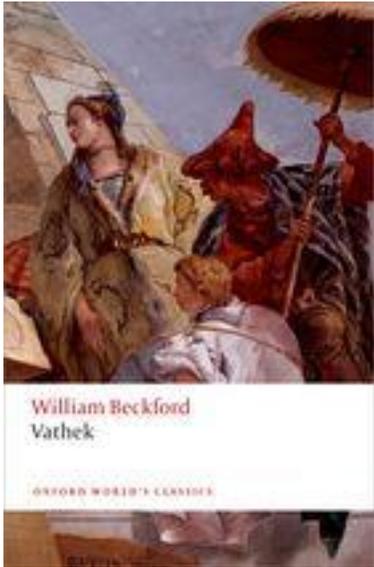
Thomas Keymer, 'Shakespeare in the Novel', in *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge University Press, 2012. pp.114-40. Discusses Beckford's use in *Modern Novel Writing* of quotations from Shakespeare. pp.118-9.

Lawrence & Marjorie Lyle, *Canterbury and the Gothic Revival*. Stroud: History Press, 2013. Beckford and Fonthill are included in the Chapter on the Dawn of the Gothic Revival Buildings. pp. 37, 39-40. An illustration of Fonthill from Rutter p. 41.

Mariana Warner, *Stranger Magic: Charmed States and the Arabian Nights*. Chatto & Windus, 2011; Vintage, 2012. Chapter 14. "Symbols of

Wonder”: William Beckford’s
Arabesque’, pp. 289-308.

NEW EDITION OF
VATHEK



OUP has produced a new edition of *Vathek* in the Oxford World Classics series. Edited by Thomas Keymer of the University of Toronto, it has an introduction, selections from the annotations in the 1786 and 1816 editions, notes, chronology and bibliography.

Paperback: 192 pages. £7.99

BECKFORD IN FICTION

Jon Millington’s *William Beckford: A Bibliography* has a section dealing with Beckford’s appearance in fiction. A possible addition to this category is Maurice Leitch’s *Seeking Mr Hare*, Clerkenwell Press, 2013.

The novel follows the life of the ‘resurrectionist’ Hare after his release from prison. ‘The other voice is that of a former Bow Street Runner in pursuit of Hare in an attempt to obtain the mask made of his face in jail. He has been commissioned to secure this by a rich patron, a collector of curiosities, who is identified as “Lord Beckford of Bath”. There is no such person, but I suppose Leitch means the eccentric aesthete William Beckford, who built the astonishing Fonthill Abbey’. From a review by Allan Massie, *The Scotsman*. 27 July 2013.

PORTUGAL:
AN EXCURSION
6 – 13 OCTOBER 2014



Monserate, Sintra (from an 18th-century engraving)

Portugal had a very special place in William Beckford’s affections. He first went there in 1787 and returned again in 1793 and 1798. He was so taken with the country that in 1805, some seventeen years after his first stay, he wrote ‘... my love for Portugal and my desire to return there will last as long as I live’.

We made our first excursion to Portugal in 1999, so another visit is long overdue. Sadly, our attempt to return this year did not happen due to lack of support, but we very much hope that members will join us for a visit in October 2014.

We will visit places associated with Beckford, most importantly Sintra,

where we will stay for our first four nights. We will then spend one night in Batalha (closer to the great gothic monastery) and the final two nights at Oporto. Our tour is organized by Heritage Group Travel based in Bath.

One member who came on our last trip to Portugal was Carmen Blacker FBA, the distinguished scholar of Japanese culture. Here are a few extracts from the letter she wrote about the visit. ‘You chose a delightful hotel [at Sintra] for us to stay in, and I shall never forget the view from my balcony of pink palaces peeping out of dark forests and the mountainside sloping down to the sea. It was the perfect base for the party to stay in ... I feel I am just beginning to digest everything we saw – palaces, monasteries, scenes in azulejos, gardens with ruined hermit cells and Etruscan faces and Mogul arches. The week was a marvellous stimulus to the imagination, as well as full of good fellowship, delicious food and memorable conversations at every meal’.

If you would like to receive the full itinerary for the tour, please contact Ali Bevan at Heritage Group Travel, 12 Charlotte Street, Bath BA1 2NE. Tel 01225 466620. heritage@grouptour.co.uk

AGM 2013

Twenty-four members attended the AGM at Keats House, Hampstead on 8 June.

The Chairman in reviewing the year's activities said that last year's AGM at Fonthill had been attended by a record number of members who enjoyed the opportunity to explore the landscape around the Fonthill Abbey thanks to the kindness of Mr and Mrs Stephen Morant. It had been a memorable occasion. Thoughts again turned to Fonthill, when Professor Caroline Dakers gave the annual Beckford Lecture in November at the Travellers Club. The lecture was followed by dinner. The Chairman was keen to emphasize that the lecture is open to all members, whether attending the dinner, or not.

The Treasurer reported income of £6,673 with expenditure of £5,760. It was agreed to explore the possibility of charitable status, in the hope of increasing income through the Gift Aid scheme.

The formal business was followed by lunch in the garden and then members had

the opportunity to explore the house where Keats had lived 1818-1820.

THE BECKFORD LECTURE

This year's Beckford Lecture will be held at the Travellers Club on Tuesday 19 November, when Charles Sebag-Montefiore will talk about his book *The British as Art Collectors*. The main subjects covered by the book include Henry VIII, who harnessed the arts to the service of the crown; Charles I and the Whitehall Circle; The Grand Tour and the country house boom; the bonanza for collectors created by Napoleonic Wars; the passion for French, Spanish and early Italian art; the new collectors spawned from the Industrial Revolution, banking and shipping; and the reluctant embrace of Impressionism and modernism. He is a Trustee of the National Gallery and Treasurer of the Friends of the National Libraries.

The lecture will be followed by dinner. A booking form is enclosed.

WEBSITE

A contents list of the Beckford Journal vols 1-18 is now on the website. We hope to make early issues of the Journal available on the site in coming months.

www.beckfordsociety.org

BECKFORDIAN INFLUENCES

'The singing lobster was a gift from a friend, a Korean waiter, behind are some William Beckford novels. Beckford was a compulsive collector and a total egomaniac. He had no friends – the only person who would speak to him was the Duke of Wellington. We like to have things that no one else has: no one has more than 100 Christopher Dresser vases for example. We do'. From an interview with the artists **Gilbert & George**. *Times*. 19 May 2012.

Turner Price short-listed painter **Dexter Dalwood** and professor of art and design at Bath Spa University, nominated Brian Fothergill's *Beckford of Fonthill* as his chosen book, when interviewed for the *Observer's* 'On My Radar' series. 'I've always been fascinated by William Beckford, an English eccentric aesthete who burnt through an enormous fortune while possessing an amazing eye as an art collector. Some of the key paintings in the National Gallery once belonged to him'. *Observer*, 10 Feb 2013.

The Mexican film director **Guillermo del Toro** lives with his family in the 'sleepy suburb of Thousand Oaks, in the San Fernando Valley. And it's here he has created his greatest monument to his love of fable and fantasy. His very own house of curiosities called Bleak House. "When I was a kid I read about Fonthill Abbey" he says, "where the author William Beckford had the largest cabinet of curiosities in the world. And I dreamed of one day driving myself broke creating a strange place of my own". From an interview with Sanjiv Bhattacharya, *Daily Telegraph*, 6 July 2013.

THE LORD OF LONDON

Dr Perry Gauci, author of *William Beckford, First Prime Minister of the London Empire*, will give a lecture about the Alderman entitled *The Lord of London* at the Building of Bath Collection, Bath on Wednesday 25 September at 6pm. Tickets £10. Tel 01225 460705 or beckford@bptrust.org.uk The lecture is in support of building conservation at Beckford's Tower.