



THE BECKFORD NEWSLETTER



NO 42 MARCH 2015

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
SATURDAY 6 JUNE 2015

SALISBURY MUSEUM
THE KING'S HOUSE
THE CLOSE, SALISBURY



J M W Turner, Salisbury Cathedral from the East, c.1798

AGENDA AND BOOKING FORM ENCLOSED

TWENTY YEARS ON

In early 1995 the Society's formation was announced in a letter to recipients of the Beckford Tower Trust's Newsletter and in various newspapers and journals. The first membership application was that from Philip Hewat-Jaboor on 2 March, and by the year's end almost one hundred people had joined.

The years have passed very quickly. There have been lectures, excursions, and foreign trips. We have published Jon Millington's Beckford bibliography, some twenty issues of *The Beckford Journal* and four lectures volumes, not to mention the cobbling-together of over forty Newsletters.

We still have many of our original members, but if the Society is to survive and prosper we need to recruit more new members. Please do spread the word about our Society, and do persuade your friends and colleagues to join our ranks.

***Gift Aid* – UK MEMBERS**

We are grateful to those members who have signed and returned Gift Aid forms as this will increase our revenue and greatly help our work.

BECKFORD LECTURE AND DINNER 2014



Vice President, Gerlof Janzen; Chairman, Sir Malcolm Jack; the Portuguese Ambassador, HE João de Vallera; and Secretary, Sidney Blackmore at the Beckford Dinner.

Sadly, owing to an accident, Didier Girard could not travel to London to give last year's Beckford Lecture. However, our Chairman, Sir Malcolm Jack, at very short notice, kindly agreed to lecture. His subject: 'There formed my Paradise: William Beckford in Portugal' was very appropriate given our excursion to that country a few weeks earlier and so was very much in the minds of those who had made the pilgrimage.

We were honoured that the Portuguese Ambassador, H. E. João de Vallera and his wife were able to attend the lecture and Beckford dinner. Once again, the Travellers Club provided the perfect setting for our annual London evening.

SIR MALCOLM JACK KCB PhD FSA

Sir Malcolm Jack has advised the Committee that he is stepping down as Chairman after twenty years in post. While in no way losing interest in the Society, he believes a change in office holder would be beneficial at this time.

We are very grateful to Malcolm for steering us through our first two decades. As a Beckford scholar and with professional knowledge of procedure and the legislature (as Clerk to the House of Commons) he brought unique experience to his chairmanship.

The committee proposes that Stephen Clarke, who has been a long standing member of the Committee, should take over as Chairman at this year's AGM. Stephen is a London lawyer and an honorary Research Fellow at the University of Liverpool, whose special interests are William Beckford, Horace Walpole, the early Gothic Revival and Samuel Johnson. He is a Trustee of Strawberry Hill, Dr Johnson's House in Gough Square and the Friends of the National Libraries. He is the author of *The Strawberry Hill Press and its Printing House* (2011).

Members are aware of the sad death of Dr Anthony Hobson last year, leaving the post of President vacant. We are deeply grateful for

the support Anthony gave to the Society during his fifteen years as President. The Committee proposes that Sir Malcolm Jack should be appointed as President.

BECKFORD LECTURE 2015

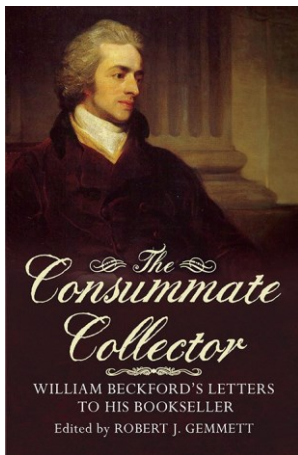
This year's Beckford Lecture will be given by Professor Thomas Keymer on Thursday 26 November at the Travellers Club in London.

Professor Keymer is Chancellor Jackman Professor of English at the University of Toronto. After studying at Cambridge, he taught at Royal Holloway, University of London and St Anne's College, Oxford.

His research interests focus mainly on Restoration, eighteenth-century and Romantic-period English and Irish literature. He is General Editor of *The Review of English Studies* and co-General Editor of *The Cambridge Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*. He is the author of many critical essays and books, including the Oxford World Classics editions of Johnson's *Rasselas*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Richardson's *Pamela*. In 2013, OUP published his edition of Beckford's *Vathek*.

Thomas Keymer's edition of *Vathek* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) is reviewed in *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* (Vol. 37) Dec 2014, pp 570-571 where Nadya Chishti-Mujahid describes it as one of the finest scholarly Orientalist texts that Oxford University Press has recently produced. 'Keymer's balanced introduction to *Vathek* wisely makes no apologies for the Orientalist nature of the tale; instead it contextualises the book by delineating why it acquired the popularity that it did, and what it implicitly tells us about its author'.

A new and revised edition of Robert J. Gemmett's *The Consummate Collector. William Beckford's Letters to his Bookseller*, has just been published.



The volume prints Beckford's correspondence with the bookseller George Clarke over the

years 1830-1834. It reveals Beckford as passionate collector: fastidious, impatient, restless, and demanding. In particular, condition is all important: the quality and state of engraved illustrations, and binders must always produce work of the highest quality. That well-known phrase of his: 'Nothing second rate enters here' is borne out by these letters.

The letters also throw light on Beckford's enthusiasm for the novels of Disraeli, and on Clarke's role as literary agent in negotiations for the publication of *Italy: with Sketches of Spain and Portugal* and other works.

This new edition includes in complete form, for the first time, fifteen letters from Clarke to Beckford. In total, there are 385 letters covering the five year relationship between Beckford and Clarke.

The volume has (as an appendix) the description of the library at Fonthill Abbey by William Clarke, George's father, which first appeared in *Repertorium Bibliographicum*, 1819.

Hardback 285 pages
35 illustrations. £35

Fonthill Media, 2014.

BOOKS AND ARTICLES

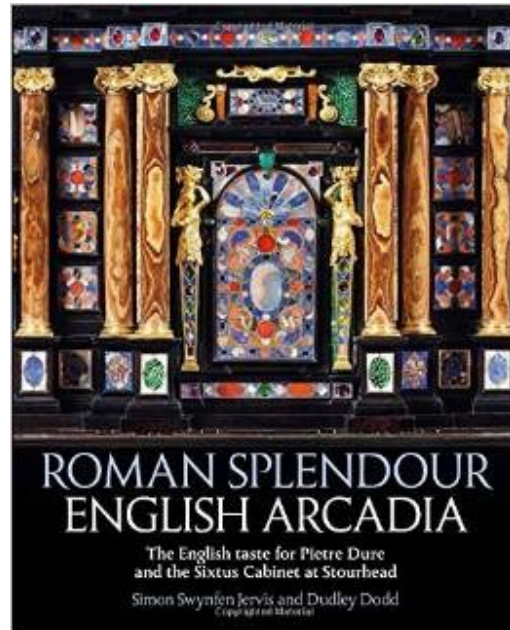
***Slavery and the British Country House.* Edited by Madge Dresser and Andrew Hann. Swindon: English Heritage (2013)** investigates how country houses are linked to the wealth derived from slavery.

The Beckford family and their houses are not specifically covered, but there are illustrations of the staircase at Doddington House, showing the decorative ironwork from Fonthill Splendens (p.116), and George Robertson's painting *Roaring River, Jamaica*, commissioned by William Beckford of Somerley in 1772 (p.111).

***Terror and Wonder. The Gothic Imagination.* Edited by Dale Townshend. The British Library, 2014.**

A volume to accompany the British Library's exhibition has six essays on aspects of the Gothic, providing an overview of the Gothic imagination over the past two hundred and fifty years. The section 'William Beckford, Vathek and the Oriental Tale' (pp. 78-81) includes Reynold's portrait of Beckford and illustrations of Fonthill from Rutter. 'Fonthill Abbey in Ruins' is also illustrated (p.96).

Simon Swynfen Jervis and Dudley Dodd, *Roman Splendour, English Arcadia: The Pope's Cabinet at Stourhead*, Philip Wilson Publishers, 2014.



This lavishly illustrated book tells the story of Pope Sixtus V's extraordinary pietre-dure cabinet that Henry Hoare brought to Stourhead, his Wiltshire house, in 1740. The introduction gives a survey of the English appetite for pietre-dure including collectors such as William Beckford and his son-in-law the 10th Duke of Hamilton. An appendix gives descriptions by travellers and writers who saw the cabinet at Stourhead, including William Beckford who visited the house in 1814, when he wrote, 'Sixtus the Fifth's cabinet is divine'.

TURNER'S WESSEX – ARCHITECTURE AND AMBITION

This summer Salisbury Museum will hold the first ever exhibition devoted to J M W Turner's drawings and paintings of Salisbury cathedral, the city and its surroundings.

The exhibition curated by the Turner scholar Ian Warrell, focusses on three aspects of Turner's many depictions of the Salisbury area: firstly, his responses to the Cathedral and city, particularly in connection with the commissions he received from the local antiquarian Sir Richard Colt Hoare of Stourhead; secondly, the series of views of Fonthill that he painted for William Beckford; and finally, his work recording Wessex, extending over a period of thirty years.

The exhibition will include loans from museums and galleries across the UK, including Birmingham, British Museum, Fitzwilliam, National Galleries of Scotland, V & A and Whitworth Art Gallery. The exhibition is supported by a substantial loan from Tate Britain.

The exhibition runs from Friday 22 May – Sunday 22 September.

Lectures connection with the exhibition include:

Tuesday 26 May at 6.00 pm.

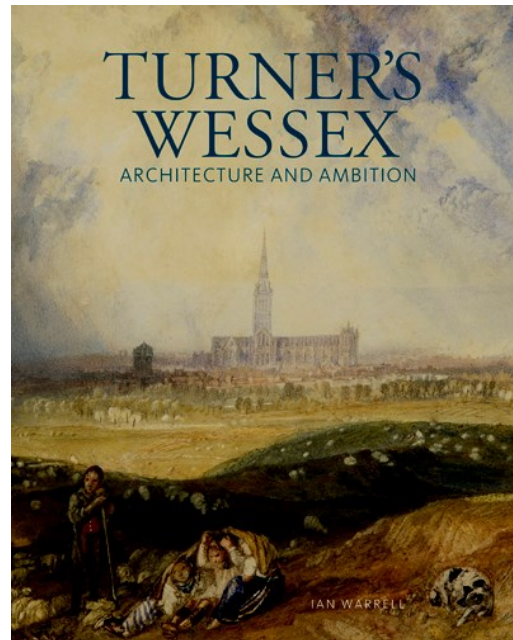
Ian Warrell, *Exploring Turner's Wessex*.

Tickets £15, to include preview, wine and finger food.

Wednesday 3 June at 6.30 pm.
Eric Shanes, *J M W Turner. His Life and Masterworks*.

Tickets £15, to include preview and wine.

SALISBURY MUSEUM
THE KINGS HOUSE
65 THE CLOSE,
SALISBURY SP1 2EN



A lavishly illustrated book by curator Ian Warrell accompanies the exhibition. There is a section on Fonthill, and many of Turner's Stonehenge views are included. Published by Scala. 208 pages. 220 images. ISBN 978 1 85759 930 5. Price £25.

IN THE AUCTION ROOM



A portrait miniature of Beckford's daughter Susan Euphemia, Duchess of Hamilton was offered for sale at Lyon and Turnbull's, Edinburgh on 14 January 2015. On ivory, signed indistinctly '----viro Pizzetto', in an elaborate giltwood frame, the painting made £1,375 including buyer's premium,

William Beckford's copy of John Gamble, *Sketches of History, Politics and Manners taken in Dublin and the North of Ireland*, 1811 in a Fonthill binding, with three pages of notes in pencil by Beckford, was sold by Chiswick Auctions, London on 28 January 2015 (lot 70). The notes, which refer to the relevant pages in the book, included: '33. Mr C – the celebrated advocate, hideously ugly and mean looking, but a great favourite of the ladies ... 53. The D. of Richmd. a five [?] bottle man

who drinks grog & , smokes tobacco after supper like a West India [?] planter ... 102. Cromwell's atrocities at Drogheda 1649 equal any we have heard of in French Revolution ... 293. Ireland much freer than our own Island from a horrid vice which has imported a portion of the abomination of the Continent to the English character ...'. The book fetched £900, against an estimate of £300-£500.

In the same sale, Sir Michael Sadler's copy of *Vathek* (London, 1815) sold for £110. The book has a one page contemporary autograph quotation [possibly in Byron's hand] inserted at the front: 'Vathek was another of the tales I had a very early admiration of ...' (torn without loss). Sadler an educational pioneer and Master of University College, Oxford (1923-1934) was father of Michael Sadleir, the author and publisher.

Rutter's *A Description of Fonthill* ... 6th edition, 1822, bound with various other works, including fourteen leaves of contemporary newspaper cuttings about Fonthill , and an account in manuscript (dated 1822) briefly describing a tour to Fonthill, Wilton and other places, was sold by Dominic Winter Auctions on 4 March 2015 (lot 61) for £760.

BECKFORDIANS IN PORTUGAL



Nineteen members participated in our Portuguese tour last October. We stayed for four nights in Sintra where we visited Beckford's Monserrate under the expert guidance of Gerald Luckhurst who has worked on the restoration of the gardens for over twenty-five years. We also saw the Royal Palace, and on a misty afternoon Pena Palace, with its eclectic mix of architectural styles. The Quinta da Regaleira fascinated and delighted us with its curious follies. Beckford, one felt, would have been equally amused.



Gerald Luckhurst talks about Monserrate

One evening, the poet and writer Landeg White, who has published a prize-winning translation of Luís Vaz de Camões's *Os Lusíadas* (*The Lusíads*) came to talk to us about this epic poem. On another evening, we were generously entertained by our Chairman, Sir Malcolm Jack and his cousin, Mrs Manuela Vidigal, at Parede. A memorable occasion, when it was possible to eat in the garden almost under the shadow of the grapefruit trees.

In Lisbon we explored the Belem district seeing the great Monastery of Jerónimos, and after a surfeit of Manueline gothic retreated to the Casa Pastéis de Belem to indulge in coffee and custard tarts. Gerald Luckhurst joined us at the Palace of Queluz, the huge rococo summer palace and described the

restoration work being undertaken in the gardens

We explored the vast baroque palace and monastery of Mafra, with its great library (there are even drawers to house the protective bats) and monks' infirmary. We followed in Beckford's footsteps to visit the places described in his *Excursion to the Monasteries of Alcobaça and Batalha*.



Antonio Silvestre guides us at Batalha

The final days of our tour were spent in Oporto in a hotel on the river close to the Luis I bridge. We visited the small town of Guimarães, the 'Cradle of Portugal' and the pilgrimage church of Bom Jesus do Monte. Our final evening in Portugal was spent at Graham's port lodge.

One unexpected addition to our programme was a visit to the British Factory House, designed in the Palladian style between 1785-1790 as a centre for British community life and, in particular,

those engaged in the Port wine trade. Mrs Olga Lacerda very kindly showed us the building including the twin dining rooms (guests move to the Desert Room after the cheese course), map room and library with their fine furniture and pictures.

We returned to England with feelings similar to those of Beckford: '...my desire to return there will last as long as I live'.

TERROR AND WONDER: THE GOTHIC IMAGINATION

Last autumn, the British Library's exhibition *Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination* marked the 250 years since Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* was published with a survey and celebration of Gothic literature and modern interpretations of the genre in popular culture today.

One section was devoted to William Beckford. On show was Reynold's Portrait (on loan from the National Portrait Gallery) and Wyatt's model of Fonthill Abbey (on loan from Beckford's Tower). *Vathek* was represented by a German edition, with lithographs by the Austrian artist Gottfried Helnwein (Bayreuth: Bear Press, 1985).

LANDMARK TRUST

This year the Landmark Trust which has done so much to rescue and restore smaller historic buildings celebrates its 50th anniversary. The Trust now has 194 buildings including picturesque pavilions, medieval long-houses, and gothick follies. Most of the properties are in the UK but there are some in Italy, France and USA.



Interior of the Beckford Tower apartment

Following the restoration of Beckford's Tower in 1997 - 2000, the Landmark Trust took a long-lease of the ground floor rooms, which gives the opportunity for visitors to stay in this extraordinary building. The apartment accommodates up to four people, and is available from £372 for four nights.

www.landmarktrust.org.uk

HINDU MYTHOLOGY

William Beckford's albums on Hindu mythology are described in a British Library Asian and African Studies blog (posted on 8 Dec 2014).



Varahar the boar avatar, c.1780

Beckford possessed the largest collection of Indian miniatures in private ownership in Britain in the early nineteenth-century, and by 1819 owned about twenty-three or twenty-four albums. Two were sold in 1817 and are now in the British Library. In 1882, the Beckford's great-grandson the twelfth Duke of Hamilton sold twenty albums to the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin where they are now in the Museum of Islamic Art.

FONTHILL OLD ABBEY

The grounds and woods of Old Fonthill Abbey will be open to the public again this year in May and July. There will be a choice of marked paths to follow (some steep and rugged) around woodland and Bitham Lake. Due to building work at the old abbey, contractors will fence off that immediate area.

Entry by donation. Refreshments and simple barbecue in aid of local charities. Dogs welcome on leads.

SUNDAY 24 MAY

in aid of
Fonthill Gifford Church and Parkinsons
UK

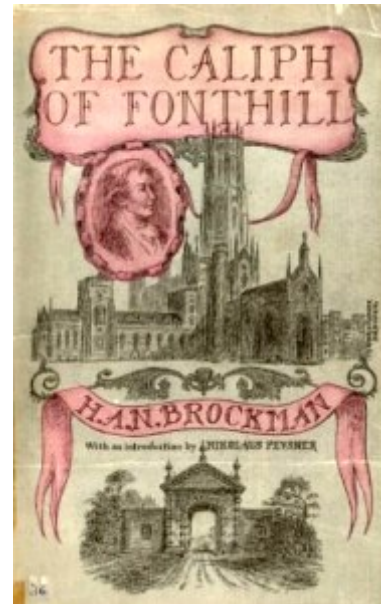
SUNDAY 5 JULY

in aid of
Hindon School, Friends Fund
and the Trussell Trust)

10.30 am – 5.00 pm.

Entry
is only via Stone Gate Lodge
(on Hindon – Newtown Lane)
at SP3 6SP.

BECKFORD'S TOWER



Beckford's Tower is showing a small exhibition *Beckford's Biographers* which explores the writers who have tried to capture the spirit of Beckford and tell his story.

7 MARCH - 1 NOVEMBER

Sidney Blackmore will give a talk 'Beckford's Biographers' on Wednesday 20 May at 6.00pm. Tickets £5

Bookings/enquires about these events. beckford@bptrust.org.uk or telephone 01225 460705

WILLIAM BECKFORD TO HIS BOOKSELLER

‘You have been making, no doubt, a pretty mess, a capital hash, an admirable stew. This I can easily imagine. Indeed, I was partly led to expect it, but that in the intervals of COOKERY you should not have found a few stray moments to send me, if not books, at least excuses, it is more than puzzling - it is confusion ten times worse confounded. It is deplorable, shameful, half-witted, & owlsh to an excess I never conceived possible - not being myself (I hope)

‘The hooting tenant of the sapless tree’

I shall neither mope nor screech. I am perfectly well disposed to treat with the most serene composure every degree of stupid inattention you can be guilty of, except in one instance – that which regards Mr Scholl. That, indeed, touches me. Send him his copy. Do not push your miserable, impolitic & disgustingly ungrateful conduct beyond all comprehension & beyond all endurance. If you have any explanation, any excuses to offer, come to Bath - I will allow you to do so. I should be loth even now, even after your wrong- headed, ridiculous (to use no harsher term) behaviour, to see your connection not only with me but Bentley *incurably* blighted ...’

To William Clarke, Bath, 31 Aug. 1834

From Robert J. Gemmett, *The Consummate Collector. William Beckford's Letters to His Bookseller*. Fonthill Media, 2014. p. 202-3

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Items of Beckfordian interest are always welcome.