

unrealities of gothic fiction by creating a vast virtual reality in which other identities could be staged.

JOHN MARTIN: APOCALYPSE

John Martin's views of Fonthill Abbey published in Rutter's *Delineations* are the iconic images of Beckford's great creation. Beckford wrote that 'I've been three times running to the Exhibition in Pall Mall to admire The Capture of Babylon by Martin'.

The artist's work is the subject of an exhibition *John Martin: Apocalypse* at Tate Britain (until 15 January 2011). On show are works produced throughout his life, including the newly restored (the picture was badly damaged in a 1928 flood) *Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum*.

IN THE SAME TONE WROTE DANTE

Beckford's copy of *The Young Rifleman's Comrade: A Narrative of His Military Adventures, Captivity, and Shipwreck*, 1826, said to be a translation from the German of a work by Johan Christian

Mampel, was recently for sale on ebay.

The volume has four pages of pencilled manuscript notes by Beckford. In a note commenting on p. 78, on the pensive moment of travellers as they think of home and watch the 'broad sun decline below the horizon' and 'commune in imagination with those ... who were cherishing for us the same sentiments of affection - the same yearnings of soul', Beckford makes the following reaction: 'In the same tone wrote Dante a decent time ago & so sings Samuel Rogers & 50 Bards of the same feathers - ('the imitators pecus' of the present day) & so will their successors continue to do for myriads of centuries over & over & over again till the broad Sun becomes narrowed & wizzened by incalculable old age & wears out as well as the Poets in verse & prose, he must be sickened to death of illuminating'.

This Newsletter is edited by
Sidney Blackmore
The Timber Cottage
Crockerton
Warminster
Wiltshire BA12 8AX - UK
Tel 01985-213195
Sidney.Blackmore@btintemet.com



THE BECKFORD NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO 35 - SEPTEMBER 2011

THE BECKFORD LECTURE
THURSDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2011



THE GRAND TOUR:
THE CONTEXT FOR WILLIAM BECKFORD

PROFESSOR JEREMY BLACK

6.30PM

THE TRAVELLERS CLUB
106 PALL MALL, LONDON SW1

DRINKS WILL BE SERVED FROM 6.00PM

SIR MALCOM JACK KCB

We offer many congratulations to our Chairman, who was honoured in the Birthday Honours with the award of Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath.

AGM 2011

Forty members and guests attended the AGM on Saturday 11 June at Strawberry Hill.

After tours of the recently restored mansion house, Anna Chalcraft of Strawberry Hill and Amy Frost of Beckford's Tower spoke about the interpretation of historic buildings and the challenges their buildings present.

AGM – 19 MAY 2012

Our Annual General Meeting has traditionally been held on a Saturday in early June. Next year, however, because of two bank holidays in early June, the AGM will be held on Saturday 19 May, in Bath.

BECKFORD LECTURE AND DINNER 2011

17 NOVEMBER 2011

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*.

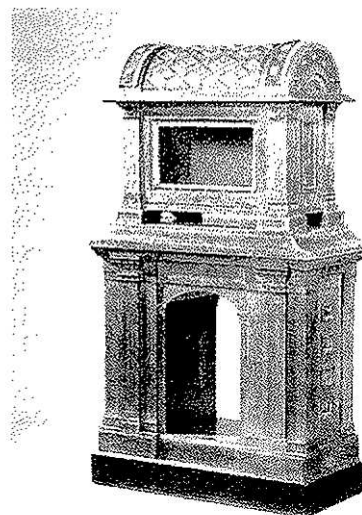
He is the author of over 100 books, especially in eighteenth century British politics and international relations. He wrote *The British and the Grand Tour* (1985) and *Italy and the Grand Tour* (2003). His recent books include *Slavery*, and *Debating Foreign Policy in Eighteenth Century England*. He gave a lecture at London's Guildhall last February to commemorate the tercentenary of Alderman William Beckford's birth.

The Lecture will be held at the Travellers Club in London on Thursday 17 November at 6.30pm. The Society's tenth Beckford Dinner will take place after the lecture.

A booking form is enclosed

Cover illustration: *Cliffs and Pines nr Grotto of Posillipo* by John Robert Cozens.

BECKFORD'S COFFER AND STAND



Thanks to the generous assistance of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Art Fund and numerous personal donations the Beckford Tower Trust has successfully raised £285,000 to purchase an oak cabinet of coffer form, with gilt-bronze mounts, on an arcaded stand, most probably designed by William Beckford and the architect H. E. Goodridge and made for Lansdown Tower.

It is the only known complete survivor from a set of four designed for the Scarlet Drawing Room on the ground floor of the Tower. Created between 1831 and 1841, it was possibly made by Robert Hume Junior who was

frequently employed by Beckford in the production of furniture. Another of the four coffers, without its stand, is in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Like most of the furniture commissioned by Beckford the coffer and stand was once an integral part of a particular interior scheme. In the Scarlet Drawing Room, the four coffers and stands were located at either end of the room and served as both focal points for the four corners, and as treasures chests housing items from his collection. Two of the set of four can be seen in Willes Maddox's depiction of the room commissioned by Beckford and used to illustrate the publication *Views of Lansdown Tower* (1844). They are shown flanking the apse at the end of the room in which sits the oak tripod pedestal purchased by the Beckford Tower Trust in 2003.

Goodridge, Bath's leading 19th century architect, was responsible for many of the cabinets and pieces designed for the Tower and worked closely with Beckford. This partnership resulted in the strong architectonic forms of the Tower furniture, of which the coffer and stand is a superb example. The domed top of the coffer has the suggestion of the outer

surface of a barrel vault, and echoes the coffered ceilings that Goodridge designed for the Book Room and the Sanctuary at the Tower. The domed arch of the coffer is also seen in the round-headed window openings, the arched mirrors above fireplaces and in doorways throughout the Tower interiors, clearly illustrating the strong continuity of design running between the Tower furniture and the spaces it was created for. This continuity is further reinforced in the roundels that are interspersed between the raised lozenges on the domed top and on the side of the coffer; a form seen throughout the Tower interiors and furniture and which also have in this piece the Hamilton Cinquefoil from Beckford's Coat of Arms carved into them. A further relationship between the coffer and stand and other features designed by Goodridge for the Tower can be seen in the influence of antique Roman sarcophagi, a form that Beckford took great inspiration from. The domed top of the coffer is seen again in both the tomb Goodridge designed for Beckford's dog in the garden of the Tower (now lost), and the pillars he designed to enclose Beckford's own sarcophagus when it was briefly located at Bath Abbey Cemetery, and which now form part of the Lansdown Cemetery entrance.

Behind the plate glass door of the coffer Beckford would have placed magnificent items from his collection, such as those seen in the three *Objects of Vertu* paintings in the Beckford's Tower collection. Thus the coffer served as a cabinet of curiosities, and was an intrinsic part of the highly influential system of displaying collections that Beckford cultivated at Fonthill Abbey and perfected at Lansdown.

With the original interiors now lost, the display of original furniture is essential to our ability to interpret the spaces and interior schemes that Beckford created at Lansdown Tower.

AMY FROST
CURATOR OF BECKFORD'S
TOWER

THE LAST TOMMY

Harry Patch (1898-2009) known as the last fighting Tommy, was briefly the oldest man in Europe and the last surviving soldier to have fought in the First World War. In his life, written in conjunction with Richard van Emden, he records that 'I was

born and brought-up in a semi-detached house [in Combe Down, Bath] called Fonthill, with an adjoining house called Beckford Cottage. When the houses were built, I was told that from the tops of the scaffolding, it was possible to see Fonthill Abbey built for William Beckford ...'

THE INAUGURATION OF THE ROSE GARDEN AT MONSERRATE

Monserrate at Sintra was leased 1793-99 by William Beckford who carried out work on the house and its garden. The present house was built in 1858 by Sir Francis Cook and designed by the architect James Knowles. Recently a major restoration programme has been undertaken.

September 2010

My dog and I were walking on the cliffs above the Sintra beaches, listening to the soothing sound of the Atlantic and admiring the sunset when peace was disturbed by the ringing of my mobile phone.

"I have some VIPs coming to Portugal in early spring. Any ideas of where they could go?" asked Alex Ellis, British Ambassador to Portugal. I

naturally suggested the visitors inaugurate the Rose Garden at Monserrate. However there was one minor issue: very little was left of the original rose garden to inaugurate. Since 2004 the area had been several times cleared of acacias and brambles, old and new paths marked, 300 roses planted, but that was all. I suspected the VIP might be the Prince of Wales - his love of gardens and interest in restoration are well known. Monserrate, a unique English garden abroad, with its pavilion currently being restored was the ideal location. The garden was now beginning to take shape and the palace had already undergone serious repairs in the past four years, but there was still much to be done. At his request, the Ambassador was sent a short history of Monserrate and of the Rose Garden.

Alex Ellis agreed with the idea and suggested I speak with Prof. António Lamas, CEO of Sociedade Parques de Sintra-Monte da Lua, who welcomed the project. There were many challenges however: the construction of paths in granite cobbles and borders, installation of drains, automatic irrigation and reservoirs, the purchasing of rose bushes and their subsequent planting, the restoring of part of the Great Lawn, and the

preparation of the Garden to receive Royalty. All this work was carried out during a very, very wet winter and all of course very hush-hush. Work began in earnest directed by Landscape Architect and Horticulturist Gerald Luckhurst. All this before Clarence House had confirmed the visit.

Roses, sponsored by the Friends of Monserrate, were ordered from five different countries, whilst Parques de Sintra was responsible for the landscaping.

February 2011

A reconnaissance team from the British Embassy came to Monserrate early February and went round the wet and wilting rose garden as well as the palace. They took notes and said they would duly inform the VVIPs. We had cleared the first hurdle.

On February 25th the Clarence House team arrived including the Secretaries to the Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall, who gave some tips on the visitor's preferences:

- they would appreciate an emphasis on meeting real people, not just dignitaries
- not too many stairs
- visuals would be very important

- they preferred not to walk too far in public spaces

It soon became clear that Monserrate would be the highlight of the visit. The British Embassy agreed to have music on the lawn and Jon Luxton and his horn quintet were invited to play.

March 2011

A second meeting was arranged with different members from Clarence House on the 16th March.

Meanwhile my husband, Clive Gilbert, remembered reading from the diary of Thomaz de Mello Breyner that a previous Prince of Wales (future Edward VII) had come to Portugal in May 1876 on his return from a state visit to India. There is a photo of the Prince at Monserrate with King D. Fernando showing them planting two trees to mark the close friendship between England and Portugal. This inspired us to organise the planting of two rose bushes: a "Bela Portuguesa" and a "Duchess of Cornwall". The Duchess of Cornwall rose bush was duly bought, but the "Bela Portuguesa" was very elusive. This rose bush is no longer in fashion and could not be found in England, France, Italy or even Portugal.

A week before the Royal Couple arrived Gerald Luckhurst rang me with the news and suggested I check out an old fashioned local nursery just outside Colares. Miraculously, right there, as I got out of the car, was a single vase with a "Bela Portuguesa" rose bush for sale.

Two more reconnaissance teams came from England to check out Monserrate. Against all odds the rose garden was slowly beginning to take shape but the rain persisted.



Monserrate: Restored Rose Garden, with Palace in background

Since the rose garden is at the bottom of a steep lawn a buggy was hired to take the royal couple down. Choreography was set up. Guests were informed of the protocol. Tea ordered. Security and protocol were worked out. Invitations were sent and buses were organised by the "Friends" to bring in guests from Sintra to Monserrate to avoid traffic and parking problems.

March 28

The Royal Couple arrived in Portugal under pouring rain that continued all day and most of the night. At the Banquet at Queluz Palace, that night Prince Charles said "I am proud that the British community in Portugal see it as important to 'give something back' to their adopted home by doing something that, dare I say it, British people often do rather well – volunteering. Be it through organizing sailing for disabled people in Cascais, restoring the Monserrate garden or the invaluable work of the Royal British Legion. I could not be more impressed by their determination to give some of their free time to help where they can."

March 29

The day started off well with sunshine and no rain. However the Embassy staff rang to say that Clarence House had decided that the Royal couple would not go down the lawn to the rose garden and would remain around the Palace. It was a big disappointment to everyone involved in the visit. Parques de Sintra had put so much time, effort and money into having the Rose Garden ready. The plaque, buggy, tea, music, guests: all was planned to happen on the lawn and by the rose garden. But

“noblesse oblige”. Quick thinking and flexibility were essential. The rose planting would be carried out on the terrace. Two large clay pots were bought. Gerald Luckhurst and Head Gardener Timothy Stretton arranged for spades, watering cans, earth and fertilizer to be on the ready for the planting.

When the Royal visitors arrived slightly later than scheduled everything and everyone was in place.

Both the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall won everyone’s admiration with their sense of humour, charm and genuine interest. One of the Friends of Monserrate said that “I felt like calling the Duchess “Camilla” – she was so easy to talk to”. According to the Condes de Nova Goa the informal climate was also very impressive as no bodyguards were apparent, the couple moved leisurely from group to group. “The introductions and subsequent conversation lasted possibly no more than one minute but to us it felt like at least five, such was the undivided attention given to each of us.”

The planting of the rose bushes by the Prince and Duchess delighted the press. The various

phases of the rose planting were the chosen photo on practically every paper. After questioning whether the fertilizer was “organic” the Prince then put his extremely elegantly clad leather soled shoe on the vase after saying “Now you have to tread it!”. Prince Charles was especially impressed “by the quality – not to mention the scale – of the restoration”.



The Prince of Wales & Duchess of Cornwall Planting Roses

From the day Sérgio Rau Silva, one time Committee Member of the Friends of Monserrate, received the invitation to Monserrate to meet the Royal couple, his three children (Inês 11, Rita 9 and six year-old Luís), grew more and more excited with the idea of going to Monserrate. They asked many questions, sparked by the magic of the place and the presence of royalty.

With child like innocence Luís decided that he would give “Camilla” flowers. She was, he

imagined, like a princess in a fairy tale. Whilst the family’s Russian gardener hung bunting on the “Quinta’s” main gate that was on Royal couple’s route to Monserrate, Luís pestered him to pick flowers to give to the “Princess”.

Finally at Monserrate, after what seemed to the children, beautifully dressed in grey suits, an endless wait, the Prince of Wales stopped by them holding the Union Jacks with Luís also clutching his flowers. Prince Charles jokingly asked them “Should you not be in school? Don’t tell me you missed school just to receive me?” At which point Luís promptly gave the already wilting bouquet to a very well dressed lady who was accompanying HRH. To Luis’ dismay and amidst general laughter he had given the flowers to the Friends of Monserrate President, Dinah Azevedo Neves, not to the “Princess”.

Undeterred, he charmed Agnes Andersen, one of the guests, into picking a new bunch of flowers, for a second try. Whilst the guests of honour were being shown the Palace and its restoration, the guests outside were served the traditional Sintra “travesseiros”, covered in sugar, and “queijadas” which Luís happily devoured.

As the Royal couple was about to leave, Luís saw his chance, dropped his last cake, slipped through protocol and ran radiantly towards “Camilla” his face covered in sugar and gave her the bouquet.

“Tankyou, tankyou, tankyou” said the Princess as Luís later proudly told his family, stressing as a sign of distinction the way the thanks was repeated three times by the Duchess of Cornwall.

I am sure that Luís, like most present that afternoon, will always remember the 29th March 2011 at Monserrate with a special aura of magic.

EMMA GILBERT

THE BECKFORD ARMS

The Beckford Arms, at Fonthill Gifford, has recently re-opened after rebuilding and restoration following the fire which gutted two-thirds of the building last year. The pub with its restaurant and eight bedrooms has received enthusiastic reviews and comments.

www.beckfordarms.com
Tel 01747-870385

AUCTION NEWS

Included in Sotheby's New York sale of the Safra collection on 18 October is a pair of Louis XVI silver-gilt four light candelabra by Henri Auguste, Paris, from a design by Jean-Guillaume Moitte, 1799. They are possibly from Beckford's collection sold at his Upper Harley Street sale in 1817.



Henri Auguste Candelabra - Image courtesy Sotheby's

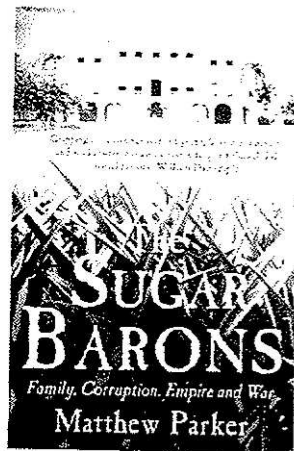
THE PICTURESQUE SOCIETY

The Picturesque Society is recruiting fresh blood. The Society encourages research into the origins, history and achievement of the Picturesque movement in architecture, landscape, music, literature and the arts, through research and publication to promote a wider understanding of the movement

and its place in the development of aesthetic taste in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Membership is £20 per year (or £26.50 for two people at the same address receiving one copy of the Journal).

Anyone interested in joining should send an Email to m.wood@placemaker.co.uk for an application form

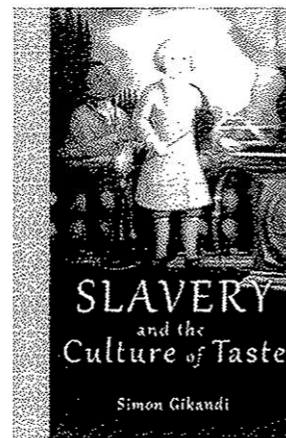
SOME RECENT PUBLICATIONS



Matthew Parker's *The Sugar Barons: Family, Corruption, Empire and War* (Hutchinson, 2011) is an account of how the West Indies became the most valuable and important colonies for the British Empire. The book makes extensive reference to the Beckfords, and two chapters (Expansion, War and the Rise of the Beckfords, and

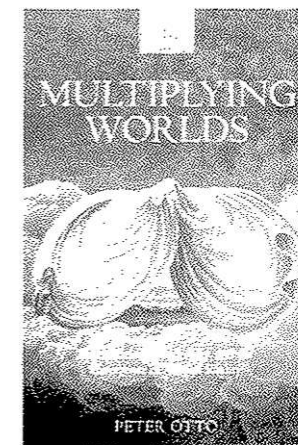
The Beckfords: The Next Generation) provide a more detailed analysis of the family.

Michael Symes, *Mr Hamilton's Elysium: The Gardens of Painshill* (Frances Lincoln, 2010) is a beautifully illustrated account of the Hon Charles Hamilton and his famous landscape garden Painshill in Surrey. Hamilton was William Beckford's great-uncle, and there are references to the latter's purchase of the Painshill statue of Bacchus and visiting Hamilton in the years when he lived in Bath after selling his Surrey property. Hamilton, like William Beckford after him, created a garden on the lower slopes of Lansdown Hill.



Simon Gikandi's *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (Princeton University Press, 2011)

demonstrates how the violence and ugliness of slavery shaped theories of taste, notions of beauty, and practices of high culture. In one section he focuses on the lives of William Beckford and Christopher Codrington, heirs of slave fortunes, who sought to remake their social standing through the patronage of art and mastery of taste.



Peter Otto's *Multiplying Worlds: Romanticism, Modernity and the Emergence of Virtual Reality* (Oxford, 2011) argues that the modern form of virtual reality first appeared in the urban/commercial milieu of London in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. In Chapter 6, he discusses Fonthill Abbey, which he describes as perhaps the most ambitious attempt to 'actualize' the real-