



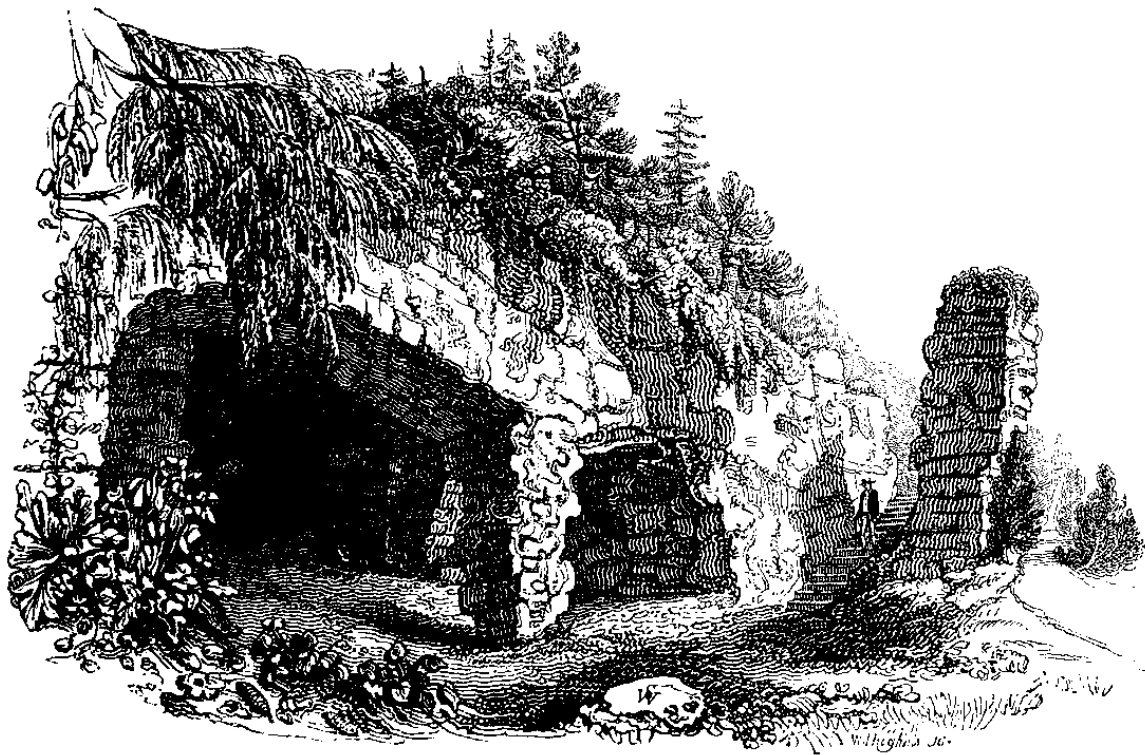
THE BECKFORD NEWSLETTER



NO 48 MARCH 2018

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SATURDAY 2 JUNE 2018



A SCENE IN THE ALPINE GARDENS.

AT THE GARDEN MUSEUM

LAMBETH PALCE ROAD, LONDON SE1 7LB

BOOKING FORM ENCLOSED

BECKFORD LECTURE 2017

The Beckford Lecture was held on 28 November when Dr Jonny Yarker lectured on *Magick or mundane? The experience of Grand Tour Rome in the 1780s*.

The lecture will be printed in this year's *Beckford Journal*.

AGM 2018

This year's AGM will be held on Saturday 2 June at the Garden Museum, Lambeth.

Housed in the mediaeval and Victorian church of St Mary-at-Lambeth, the museum re-opened in 2017 after an eighteen month redevelopment project.

The museum was founded by John and Rosemary Nicholson in 1977 after they traced the tomb of the Tradescants, plant hunters and gardeners to Charles I, in the churchyard of St Mary-at-Lambeth.

In the afternoon, Michael Cousins will lecture on Fonthill Old Park – Grottoes and Features.

AGENDA AND BOOKING FORM ENCLOSED

THE BECKFORD NEWSLETTER

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OLD FONTHILL ABBEY OPEN DAYS

The grounds of Old Fonthill Abbey will be open to the public on Sunday 6 and Sunday 20 May.

Visitors will be able to follow a variety of marked walks through bluebells, rhododendrons and around Bitham Lake (please note, some paths are very steep and rough).

Refreshments all day: homemade soup, barbecued sausages and delicious cakes. Dogs on leads are very welcome.

Donations at the gate will be gratefully received and, as in previous years, shared between Parkinson's UK and local charities.

Entry is via Stonegate Lodge (on the Hindon – Newton lane) SP3 6PS

BECKFORD LECTURE 2018

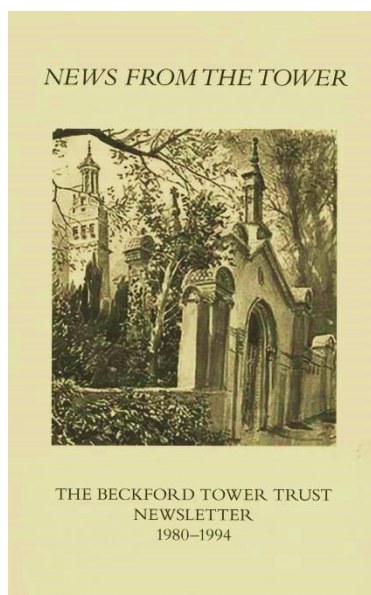
We are pleased to announce that Charles Courtenay, Earl of Devon will give this year's lecture, on the subject of William Courtenay.

The lecture on Wednesday 28 November, to be followed by dinner, will be at the Travellers Club, London SW1.

Father information will be circulated with the next *Newsletter*.

Cover illustration: *A Scene in the Alpine Gardens*, from John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey*, 1823.

NEWS FROM THE TOWER



For fourteen years (1980-1994) the Beckford Tower Trust produced a Newsletter. Edited by Jon Millington, it provided an annual treat for those interested in Beckford, with information about the Trust's activities together with a rich collection of articles on Beckford's Tower and the life and works of its creator and his immediate circle.

We have reprinted the Newsletter in book format under the title *News from the Tower*. It is a cornucopia of things Beckfordian. Useful as a reference tool, but also a delightful book for browsing and dipping into.

THE BECKFORD SOCIETY

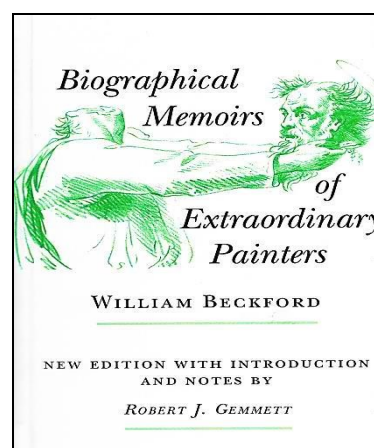
Paperback 220 x 138 mm 176 pages £6

ISBN 978-0-9537836-7-0

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS OF EXTRAORDINARY PAINTERS

'Perhaps if we search the whole history of literature, we shall not find so striking an instance of precocious genius; for these Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters ... bespeak very much more of maturity and intellect than Pope's Pastorals ... Its vein of invention, more imaginative than Gulliver's, no less natural than Scott's is inexplicably attractive'

London Review & Weekly Journal, 16 June 1827



Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters was Beckford's first book, published when he was just nineteen. His lives of five fictitious painters is a *jeu d'esprit*, composed with tongue in cheek and phrased in the terms of the most admired art criticism of the day.

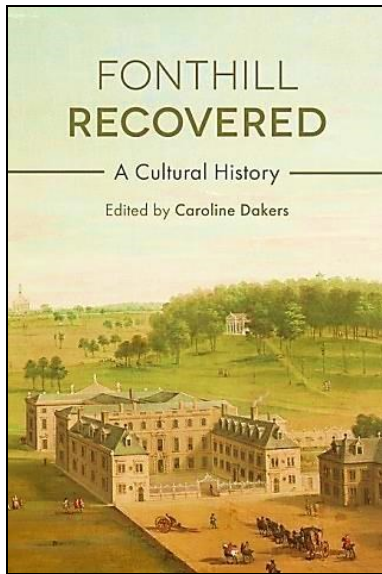
This is now available in an attractive new edition by the Beckford scholar Robert J. Gemmett; with an introduction, notes, seven illustrations, and bibliography. The cover illustration of *St Denis Bearing His Head in His Hands* comes from the 1824 edition of the work. There is even the suggestion that Beckford was responsible for the drawing on which this was based.

HOBNOB PRESS

Boards 113 pages £14.95

ISBN 978-1-906978-52-5

FONTHILL RECOVERED: A CULTURAL HISTORY



Fonthill Recovered, edited by Caroline Dakers, draws on histories of art and architecture, politics and economics to explore the rich cultural history of this famous Wiltshire estate. The first half of the book traces the occupation of Fonthill from the Bronze Age to the twenty-first century. Some of the owners surpassed Beckford in terms of their wealth, their collections, and their political power and even, in one case, their sexual misdemeanours. They include Charles I's Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the richest commoner in the nineteenth century. The second half of the book consists of twelve essays on specific topics, filling out such crucial areas as the complex history of the designed landscape, the sources of the Beckfords' wealth and their collections, and one essay that features the most recent appearance of the Abbey in a video game.

TO BE PUBLISHED MAY 2018

UCL PRESS

244 x 170 mm 382 pages

See www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-press

LINLEY SAMBOURNE'S VISIT TO FONTHILL

The cartoonist and illustrator Linley Sambourne (1844-1910) spent a weekend in 1898 at Pythouse, Tisbury when the house was leased by his wife's sister Ada (Tabby) and her husband Hamilton Fletcher.

'Sunday February 6.

Pyt House Tisbury

Up at 8.30 am. Very wet morning. Out before breakfast. After breakfast looked over library & house. Good lunch & at 3.0pm Guthrie, self, Gwen & Evelyn & Bee Bars & 2 black spaniels went for walk to Fonthill. Went past house belonging to Sir Michael Shaw Stewart & on to all that remains of Beckford's Fonthill Abbey. Went to top 118 steps. Nearby got lost in woods like Forest of Arden. Drop off a wall ... Back to tea & looked at books etc., Good dinner. Dance after with barrel organ & bed at 11.15 after smoke. Suspicion of cold in throat etc.' (*Red ink* 'Went to Fonthill Abbey')¹

On 2 Jan 1900, he attended a concert at Fonthill at which Mrs Patrick Campbell recited the *Absent Minded Beggars*, and again, when staying at Pythouse on 11 Nov 1908, walked to Fonthill.

Linley Sambourne's diaries (1882-1910) are available on the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's museums website.

¹ Reproduced by kind permission of RBKC. With thanks to Shirley Nicholson for background information.

The Sambourne family house at 18 Stafford Terrace, London W8 7BH is open on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays.

LANDMARK TRUST

The apartment at Beckford's Tower is included in the Landmark Trust's programme of Open Days, 2018. Visitors are encouraged 'to relax and enjoy the experience of being in the Landmark', on Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 September, 10.00am – 4.00pm.

The Trust's website recently pointed-out William Beckford's connection with another Landmark property, the Ruin at Hackfall near Grewelthorpe in North Yorkshire. This is a small banqueting house with one façade in the form of a Roman ruin, part of the landscape garden with waterfalls and architectural features created by John Aislabie from 1731.

Beckford accompanied by his tutor John Lettice made an English tour from Plymouth to Yorkshire in 1779. In late September, they visited Hackfall, 'a deep rocky Valley rapt with Groves and Thickets. I heard the trickling of Rills in the Woodlands ... I could have passed a whole Day in this Glen, slumbering by the bubbling Waters and harkening to the whispers of an ancient Oak'.

The Ruin is now a holiday cottage for two, with a richly decorated sitting room flanked by bedroom and bathroom. 'Flitting between the two wings across a moonlit terrace is a truly Gothic experience'. Landmark Trust Open Days are on Sat 15 – Sun 16 September.

Beckford's account of his English Tour, edited by Dick Claesson, appeared in the *Beckford Journal*. 5 (1999).

WEST END, HAMPSTEAD

Apartment blocks in a new development in West Hampstead, on the site of what was once the Beckford family's West End House, have been named after authors with local connections. The first five blocks are Hardy, Milne, Orwell, Lessing and Beckford.

Also in West Hampstead in Dornfell Street is the Beckford Primary School, originally opened in 1886 as the Broomsleigh Street School. It was reorganised between 1927 – 1932, and renamed Beckford School.

BATH RACECOURSE

The new Kelston Stand at Bath Racecourse has a Beckford Bar. The original racecourse track is thought to have been much closer to Beckford's Tower in its early years.

PORTRAIT OF THE DAY

Sir Joshua Reynolds's portrait of William Beckford was the subject of the National Portrait Gallery's *Portrait of the Day* talk on 26 January.

BOOK REVIEW

THE LOST HOUSE REVISITED

Ed Kluz and Olivia Horsfall Turner
Published by Merrell (London and New York) 2017. ISBN: 978-1-8589-4662-7

This has to be the most attractive volume added to my already groaning coffee table in 2017.

It is a compilation of short essays, by architectural historian Olivia Horsfall Turner, dealing with a selection of lost stately homes that have vanished, in whole or in part from the English landscape; the last being Coleshill House, which was consumed by fire in 1938.



Ed Kluz, Fonthill Abbey

The book is lavishly and brightly illustrated by a miscellany of archive illustrations and photographs, topped off by original artworks by Ed Kluz - paper collage and mixed media, egg tempera, scraper board, and chapter headings. Artists John Piper and Rex Whistler are mentioned in the introduction (by John Harris), and they are natural references for the style of Kluz's work. His palette is bright, with painted backgrounds for the representations of the buildings which

appear in detailed collage cut-outs. His work is meticulous, minutely detailed, and exact.

Ed was given an exhibition at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park over the winter of 2017/18, where he was able to display a wider selection of his work than appears in the book – which included watercolours and prints. When I visited the show, both to see it and attend a question and answer session with Ed and Olivia, much of the work had been sold.

One of the lost houses included in the book is Fonthill Abbey, and when I asked Ed why he had chosen to include this house in the book, I was greeted with a tide of enthusiasm from both artist and writer. As was intended, the house was built to be bigger and more impressive than anything else, and Beckfordians will not need any reminding that the reputation and interest in the house, its building, and its builder have grown with increasing impressiveness. The substance of the text will provide no surprises to followers of the man, but is adorned with contemporary illustrations of both interior and exterior and a very impressive scraper board picture, a "View of the Last Remaining Portion of Fonthill Abbey". Quite simply, the artist was fascinated by Beckford, his works and his building and not including it would have been unthinkable. He told me that the Abbey is an extremely physical rendering of Beckford's imagination and personality, unrivalled in British architecture. He feels there is still much to be understood about the man and his extraordinary building, however, both still remain elusive.

Ed Kluz was born in 1980, brought up in Swaledale, North Yorkshire, and studied at Winchester Art College. His early interest was probably piqued by his father's tales of growing up in a semi-ruinous minor stately home, Kingsley House (near Stamford in Cambridgeshire) once the family home of the author Charles Kingsley. He is a young artist, who has achieved a distinctive style, in the tradition of the 20th-century artist illustrators: Ravilious and Bawden can be added to the names cited above as illustrious predecessors. The world waits to see, after the success of the Yorkshire exhibition and the book, where his artistic focus will shift.

CHRIS PURSER

IN THE AUCTION ROOM



Fonthill meat plate from the Coysh collection

A. W. Coysh and R. K. Henrywood compiled the first reference work on blue and white transfer printed pottery. Bill Coysh (1905-2000) was a teacher, BBC producer, author and collector. Items from his collection of blue and white were sold by Andrew Smith & Son, Winchester on 6 February, including a James & Ralph

Clews Pearleware blue transfer printed meat plate with a view of Fonthill Abbey, with a bluebell border. It was illustrated and described in his *Blue-Printed Earthenware 1800-1850* (1972) p.20

William Beckford's copy of Barry E. O'Meara, *Napoleon in Exile; or a Voice from St Helena*. London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1822, was sold by Sotheby's in Paris (lot 64) on 30 October. The work prints the reflections of Napoleon's doctor on St Helena. In two volumes, with seven pages of Beckford's pencilled notes at beginning of each, showing his empathy for Napoleon in exile, and his contempt for Telleyrard and Hudson Lowe, the island's Governor: 'Nothing more desolate than the appearance of St. Helena – It was certainly not by the sentence of the great majority of the British nation that the emperor was chained to his melancholy rock.

N[apoleon], with a conviction of posthumous fame beyond the reach of contemporary depreciation, which has been published with a perfect apathy – Hudson Lowe recommended a book called *The Impostors Insignia* to General Bonaparte's perusal, adding with much urbanity perhaps he can find some characters resembling himself ...'. Sold for €6,875 (including buyer's premium). At the Hamilton Palace sale in 1883 (lot 226) it made two guineas.

Also in Paris on 30 October, Sotheby's sold (lot 40 for €5,250 including buyer's premium) one of Beckford's copies of Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, *Relation d'un Voyage du Levant*. Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1717. An account by the French botanist of his travels, lasting two years,

through the Greek archipelago, Turkey, the Black Sea, Armenia, Georgia, and Asia Minor to Smyrna. William Beckford owned three copies of works by Tournefort; two copies of the *Voyage* and one of *Eléments de Botanique* (1694).

A group of eight watercolour views by John Leigh Beckford (1791-1858) appeared in the Dominic Winter Auctions sale of Fine Art and Antiquities on 8 March.

Beckford was the son of Francis Love Beckford, and a great-nephew of Alderman Beckford. He served in the Navy 1803-1829. The watercolours of Italy and England included a view of Glevering Hall, Suffolk, the home of his cousin and brother-in-law Andrew Arcedechnes.

PAINSHILL

Highways England are proposing a number of changes to the M25 & A3 roads which will have a major impact on the Painshill landscape garden created by Charles Hamilton, William Beckford's great-uncle.

The Painshill Park Trust is calling on Highways England to reject its current 'preferred' route and to return to the project design phase so that the safeguarding of the historic park can be included in the design criteria.

The public has until 26 March to submit comments. You can show support and sign the Trust's petition on the Painshill website. www.painshill.co.uk/a3

A CURIOUS REQUEST

'Among the curious applications frequently made to Professor Owen, there was none perhaps more strange than a letter he received from a firm of surgeons near Bath on May 17 [1844]. After apologies for troubling him they write – "We have been for a few days actively engaged embalming the remains of the late William Beckford, Esq., of Fonthill Abbey, a gentleman of family and fortune. (Here follows a rough sketch of the process, which consisted of injecting the vessels with an antiseptic, treating the viscera by Dr. Baillie's process, and covering the body with an antiseptic composition and bandages.) Will you oblige us by giving us your opinion what we ought to charge? We are entirely at a loss to know the value, with a family of such wealth, of our process. It has never been done in the West of England." From a memorandum on the letter, such as it was the custom of Professor Owen to make, we gather that he "recommended £105, a reply for which the firm "sincerely thank" him'.

From Richard Owen, *The Life of Richard Owen*. London: John Murray, 1894. Vol 1, 234-235.

Sir Richard Owen (1804-1892) biologist, comparative anatomist, and palaeontologist founded the Natural History Museum.

BECKFORD'S TOWER EVENTS



Benjamin West, Portrait of Maria Beckford

EXHIBITION *THE BECKFORD WOMEN.*

10 MARCH – 28 OCTOBER

Throughout his long life William Beckford was surrounded by a collection of fascinating women. The piety of his mother and the purity of Lady Catherine Hamilton provided a strong female presence in his youth. His many letters and writings illustrate how he respected and ridiculed his half-sister (Elizabeth Hervey), adored his wife (Lady Margaret Gordon) and treasured his daughters, but frequently distanced himself from them. This exhibition explores the lives, loves, and loss of the women who influenced – and were influenced by – Beckford.

BECKFORD BOOK GROUP

The season begins with *Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil and Ruin* by Richard Devonport-Hines. A thorough and enterprising introduction to all that is Gothic. 22 MARCH 7.00-8.00pm £5

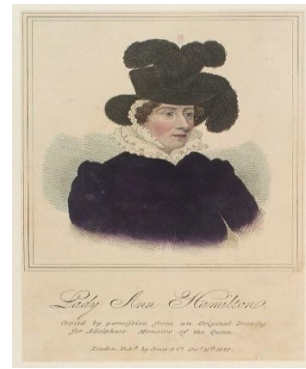
Ann Radcliffe, *Mysteries of Udolpho*
7 JUNE 7.00 – 8.00 PM £5

LECTURE *“SHE WRITES NOVELS”*

Helena Kelly (author of *Jane Austen the Secret Radical*) reveals the literary work of Beckford's half-sister Elizabeth Hervey and her fellow women novelists during the late eighteenth century.

10 MAY 6.30 – 7.30 PM £7

LECTURE *THE THREE LADIES HAMILTON*



Lady Anne Hamilton - from Adolphus's
Memoirs of Queen Caroline (1820)

Through his mother William Beckford was related to the noble Hamilton family. Sidney Blackmore examines the lives of three Hamilton women: the two wives of Sir William Hamilton, the diplomat and antiquary; and Lady Anne Hamilton, friend of Queen Caroline and guardian of Beckford's daughters.

28 JUNE 6.30 – 7.30 PM £7

Tickets for lectures can be booked on-line, or let the Administrator know you will be purchasing at the door by calling Courtney Fleming on 01225 460705

Website <http://www.beckfordstower.org.uk>

BETJEMAN'S BYGONE BRITAIN

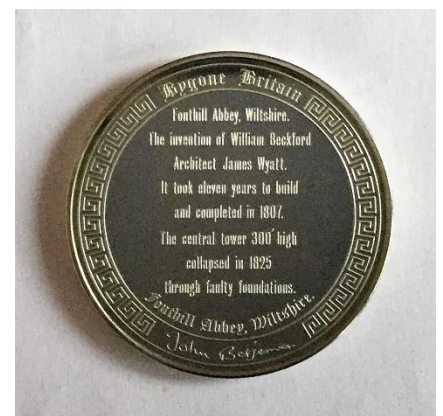


After strenuous efforts by John Betjeman (1906–1984) and others to save the Euston Arch, it was finally demolished in 1961. This failure to conserve the building must have rankled, as did the removal of the Coal Exchange the following year. So much so that when the opportunity arose a few years later to commemorate these and other vanished buildings with silver medals, he chose thirty-six under the title 'Betjeman's Bygone Britain'. Sixteen were in London, with the first medal issued being, not surprisingly, the Euston Arch. The medals were listed in an article in the Betjeman Society's journal.¹

One of the most interesting and successful medals depicted Fonthill Abbey in a pencil drawing by Peter Jackson² after John Martin's dramatic 'View of the West, & North Fronts' from Rutter's *Delineations of Fonthill* (1823). In the foreground Jackson added an open landau drawn by two horses with and a single passenger behind the footmen, and his initials PJ appear below the Abbey on the extreme left while JJ, those of the engraver John Jennings, are on the right.³ On the reverse is Betjeman's description: 'Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire. / The invention of William Beckford / Architect James Wyatt. / It took 11 years to build / and completed in 1807. / The central tower 300' high / collapsed in 1825 / through faulty foundations.' and on a curve beneath 'Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire'. All this is inside a wide border with 'Bygone Britain' at the top, John Betjeman's facsimile signature at the bottom and a key-pattern on either side.

Early in February 1973 the 'Betjeman's Bygone Britain' medal series was widely advertised in publications including *The Times*, the *Observer Magazine* and *Punch*: 'Each medal depicts a chosen monument in finely detailed relief on a mirror-bright background, and has Sir John's own inscription on the reverse'.⁴ Beginning that March, one sterling silver proof medal per month would be issued to subscribers in a plastic case at a cost of £5 each. They are 1½ inches (3.85 cm) in diameter, ⅛ inch (0.33 cm) thick and weigh 1 oz (33 g). Four minute hallmarks on the rim represent: John Pinches [Medallists Ltd.]; sterling silver 92.5%; London Assay Office; a date letter. For the Fonthill Abbey medal this letter is an italic lower case 's', denoting one year from May 1973 to May 1974. Accompanying each medal was a leaflet measuring 4 x 12 inches (10.5 x 31.5 cm) giving further details of each building, signed 'John Betjeman'. Most of these leaflets have been mislaid over the years.

Betjeman may have been embarrassed by his association with this medal issue, and it is not mentioned in his published letters.⁵ On the strength of having just received the first medal, the Euston Arch, **Bevis Hillier held that:** 'if "Betjeman's Bygone Britain" is not a majestic act of the purest *kitsch*, I don't know what is'.⁶ He later toned down his disapproval to 'a somewhat kitsch exercise'.⁷ **In any case it has been impossible to ascertain whether John Pinches approached Betjeman or vice-versa, all the more so since**



the

Franklin Mint of America, who acquired the firm in 1969, unfortunately ‘disposed of the invoices and works records from about 1930’.⁸

Before the take-over, Pinches ‘stated finite numbers to limit the [medal] issues, as opposed to the remarkably successful American sales promotion of limiting by a subscription date whatever the number’.⁹ For ‘Betjeman’s Bygone Britain’ the number of sets struck, being limited to the number of those who had subscribed by 28 February 1973, turned out to be 1263, with a further three sets for John Betjeman’s personal use.

1. Horace Liberty, “**Destroyed For Ever by Time and the Barbarians**”, *The Betjemanian* 27 (2015/2016), 10–12.

2. Peter Charles Geoffrey Jackson, FSA (1922–2003). Artist, Chairman of the London Topographical Society in 1974.

3. David Matthews, ‘Bygone Follies’, *Follies Magazine* 59, Autumn 2004, 17. My thanks to Sidney Blackmore for drawing this article to my attention.

4. John Pinches advertisement, *The Times*, 6 Feb 1973, 3.

5. Candida Lycett Green, ed. *John Betjeman Letters, Volume Two: 1951–1984*, London: Methuen, 1995.

6. Bevis Hillier, ‘Items of glorious awfulness’, *The Times*, 7 April 1973, 10.

7. Bevis Hillier, *Betjeman: The Bonus of Laughter*, London: John Murray, 2004, 142, 143.

8. John Pinches, *Medals by John Pinches. A Catalogue of Works Struck by the Company from 1840 to 1969*, London: Heraldry Today, 1987, vii.

9. *Idem*, 245.

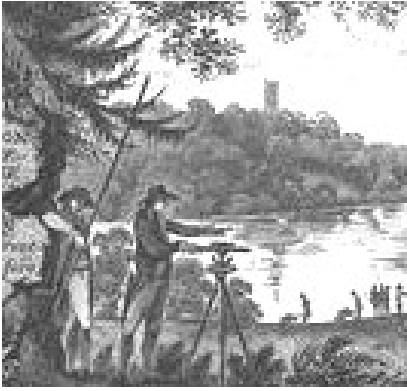
JON MILLINGTON

VIRGINIA SURTEES

Virginia Surtees, art historian, socialite and restorer of the reputation of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, died aged 100 on September 22, last year.

She compiled a catalogue raisonné of Rossetti’s works (1971) and later curated an exhibition about the artist. (Royal Academy and Birmingham, 1973). She also published a number of books chronicling friendships and scandals in nineteenth-century society.

To Beckfordians she is best known for *A Beckford Inheritance: the Lady Lincoln Scandal*. (Wilton: Michael Russell, 1977) which recalls the disastrous marriage of Beckford’s granddaughter Susan (Suzie) to Lord Lincoln, heir to the Duke of Newcastle. In a review, Bevis Hillier said the book ‘by adept characterization, pace and stylish commentary [is] a period vignette which bears comparison with a Jane Austen’. When Susan takes flight for Italy with her lover Lord Walpole, she is pursued by Gladstone “who struggled so conscientiously to rescue her as she scampered down the primrose path”.



WILLIAM BECKFORD TO HUMPHRY REPTON

‘Sir,

The Letter with which you favored me I met on my arrival at Falmouth about ten days ago.

It is impossible not to be flattered by an offer to contribute to the Ornament of my place from an Artist of your Eminence and Celebrity: but Nature has been liberal at Fonthill, and some Embellishment it has received from Art, has fortunately gained so much Approbation of my friends, that my Partiality to it in its present state will not perhaps be thought altogether inexcusable. I am, nevertheless, much honoured and obliged in your having thought Fonthill considerable enough to merit your attention.

I am, Sir

Your very obedient

And Humble Servant

W. Beckford’.

Fonthill

24th July, 1799

This year marks the bicentenary of the death of HUMPHRY REPTON. In Beckford’s novel *Azemia* (1797) Mr Wildcodger proposes that ‘various views painted of houses and seats, after the manner of Mr Repton’, be set-up in front of the houseless poor. Repton in his *Red Books*, begun in 1789, offered his clients water-colours with flaps showing the ‘before’ and ‘after’ views of the changes he proposed to their estates.

Beckford’s copy of Repton’s *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1816) is in the Getty library at Wormsley. It has a page of manuscript notes by Beckford, including one that Stephen Clarke describes as a bravura performance, with lines which include ‘The author ... rests from his Labours, Labours which he appears convinced were objects of primary & national importance, bearing the twitches of an acute & alas incurable disease with resignation and fortitude & expecting his final doom not perhaps without a sort of vague & pleasing hope of being applied to in the next world to improve & tasteify the bowers of Paradise,’ See Stephen Clarke, ‘The Wormsley Beckfords: William Beckford’s Books in the Wormsley Library’, *Beckford Journal* 16 (2010) 5-25.