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Contents

Two Beckford Visiting Cards

SIDNEY BLACKMORE

'They had drawn back from many introductions,
and still were perpetually having cards left by people
of whom they knew nothing'[1]

As Sir Walter Elliot and his daughters were reminded on arrival in Bath, the leaving of visiting cards was one of the customs of polite society. Cards were not only left but also displayed: 'they had the cards of Dowager Viscountess Dalrymple, and the Hon. Miss Carteret, to be arranged wherever they might be most visible'.[2]

The origins of the visiting card has been traced back to ancient times. Tiles bearing the worshipper's name were left at the entrance of Egyptian temples. In Greece, students wrote their names in wax on tablets. In more modern times, German university students in the seventeenth century exchanged cards bearing their names and coats of arms, and cards were used at the court of Louis XIV. Gradually the usage spread across Europe so that they were commonplace towards the end of the eighteenth century.

Cards were left by individuals, but also distributed by servants. In London in about 1800, Patrick Boyle, publisher of the *Court and Country Guide*, produced *The Ladies' Complete Visiting Guide, Containing Directions for Footmen and Porters Being Calculated for the Purpose of Receiving and Delivering Visiting Cards.* This provided a system to assist 'friendly, *learned,* and fashionable *intercourse*' – by providing a list of 'fashionable streets' arranged into districts in a sequence in which streets lead from one to another. For

each street the guide has columns for the recording of cards left and received, and also letters sent and answered. The publisher claimed that if the arrangement of the guide is followed 'one third of the great labor and expence and trouble in servants time' will be saved.[3]

Visiting cards bore a name, and often an address, together with some simple decoration. Occasionally printers tempted customers with illustrated cards. One Bath stationer advertised cards with views of the city.[4] Those who had taken the Grand Tour would often return with cards acquired in Rome showing views of the ancient monuments. Examples of early cards, owing to their ephemeral nature, have not survived to the same extent as bookplates, which are protected within the safety of a bound volume. Surviving in large numbers are the elegant cases, in silver, tortoiseshell, papier mâché, ivory, and other materials used to carry cards; these mainly date from the nineteenth century.[5]

An example of an eighteenth-century card is that of Mrs Beckford, Figure 1.[6] It is an engraved card with 'Mrs Beckford/ Wimpole Street' set within an oak-leaf garland. At the bottom of the card is the engraver's name 'Hughes/fecit'. In 1771, the year after the Alderman's death, his widow is listed as the occupant of 12 Wimpole Street, a house on the Cavendish/Harley estate. Mrs Beckford's house, dating from about 1770, was on east side of the street in the block between Wigmore Street in the south and Queen Ann Street in the north. It was a smart residential address, and the house, which she occupied until 1782, was one of the most valuable properties. Residents of the street during the 1780s included the Earl of Aberdeen (No. 4), Sir John Napier (No. 90), Sir Justinian Isham, Bt. (No. 11), Lady William Wynn (No. 14) and Sir Philip Gibbs, Bt. (No. 18).

The survival of Mrs Beckford's visiting card is due to the collecting zeal of Sarah Sophia Banks (1744–1818), sister of Sir Joseph Banks, the botanist and President of the Royal Society. From 1779 she lived with her brother and sister-in-law, Dorothea, in London at 32 Soho Square. Sarah from an early age collected in many fields:

Fig. 1. Mrs Beckford's Visiting Card. ©Trustees of the British Museum.

medals, coins, broadsides, newspaper clippings, admission tickets, play bills and book plates.[7] Her collection was enriched by gifts from friends and also acquaintances of her brother. Sir William Hamilton in a postscript to her brother wrote; 'Tell Miss Banks her collection of visiting cards increases daily', and that he would deliver them himself.[8] She frequented print sellers and engravers wearing her quilted petticoat with a 'hole on either side for the convenience of rummaging two immense pockets, stuffed with books of all sizes'.[9]

After Sarah Sophia's death in 1818, Dorothea, a collector of porcelain in her own right,[10] donated Miss Banks's collections to the British Museum and the Royal Mint.[11] Among the 19,000 items now in the British Museum's Department of Prints and Drawings are about 6,000 visiting cards. Miss Banks was a thorough and systematic collector. The visiting cards, like the book labels and admission tickets, are mounted to large sheets folded in half to create

Fig. 2. Folio with pasted bookplates, Mons: Beckford's in blue, top right.
© Trustees of the British Museum.

a folder. Recorded against each item is the year of acquisition. The British visiting cards are organised in three sequences: noblemen arranged by order of rank; commoners by alphabetical order; and 'blanks' by border or other decoration. There is a separate sequence of foreign cards.

Another card bearing the name Beckford can also be found in Miss Banks's collection, FIGURE 2.[12] It is contained within a folio of 'blank' cards with pasted images of diverse animal designs beside each of which is the date of acquisition. This is of additional interest as it shows how Miss Banks arranged her collection. The card in question is printed in blue and shows a putto being pulled in a chariot by two panthers. In the name panel is written 'Mons: Beckford'. The card was probably printed in Italy, and acquired by Miss Banks in 1794. We shall probably never know to whom the card belonged. It is conceivable that it might well be the card of William Beckford, but his Grand Tours had taken place in 1780–82, though he was probably again in Italy in late 1792. A stronger possibility is William's cousin Peter, who lived principally in Florence between 1783 and 1799.

Sarah Sophia Banks and her remarkable collection are gradually becoming better known through recent research.[13] Items from the British Museum collection are now on the museum's digital database, so can be readily accessed.[14] Miss Banks's collection not only illuminates aspects of Georgian life and culture, but also presents enigmas to tease and challenge us.

1 Jane Austen, *Persuasion,* Chapter 15

2 *Ibid*. Chapter 16

3 Patrick Boyle, *The Ladies' Complete Visiting Guide, Containing Directions for Footmen and Porters Being Calculated for the Purpose of Receiving and Delivering Visiting Cards*, 1800, vii

4 '… rather to give a Shilling for a Pack of Name Cards, which, in an accurate manner, exhibit the particular Place of their Residence, than the SAME PRICE for the common Visiting Ticket, which are, for the most part, overloaded with unmeaning Figures or tawdry Borders'. Advertisement by proprietor of the Ladies and Gentleman's Library. *Bath Chronicle,* 16 May 1782, 3

5 *See* Edwin Banfield, *Visiting Cards and Cases,* Trowbridge: Baros Books, 1989

6 British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings. C, 1.793

7 For her bookplate collection (and account of her life) *see* Anthony Pincott, 'The book tickets of Miss Sarah Sophia Banks (1744–1818)', *The Bookplate Journal.* 2(1) 2004, 3-30

9 Letter of 18 January 1785. British Library. Add.34048. D.C.T. IV.118. Quoted in Pincott, op. cit. 14

9 From an account of Miss Banks in John Thomas Smith, *A book for a rainy day or recollections of the events of the years 1766–1833.* 1845. Quoted by Pincott, op. cit.10-11

10 *See* Arlene Leis, 'A Little Old-China Mad: Lady Dorothea Banks (1758-1828) and Her Dairy at Spring Grove'. *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 40 (2), 2017, 198-22

11 The paper collections are now divided between the British Museum and British Library. For a list of the British Museum items *see*: A. Griffiths and R. Williams, T*he Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum: User Guide*, 1987, 82-4. The British Library has broadsides, cuttings from newspapers, and engravings (General Reference Collection L.R.301.h.3-11), also playbills, notices and cuttings dealing with private theatrical performances, 1750–1808. (937.g.96). Her coins are divided between the British Museum and Royal Mint, *see*: Catherine Eagleton, 'Collecting African Money in Georgian London: Sarah Sophia Banks and Her Collection of Coins', *Museum History Journal,* 6 (1), 2013, 23-8

12 British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings. C,1.2825

13 Arlene Carol Leis, *Sarah Sophia Banks: Femininity, Sociability and the Practice of Collecting in Late Georgian England.* PhD Thesis, University of York, 2013. *See also*, Arlene Leis, 'Sarah Sophia Banks: 'Collecting ephemera in late Georgian England'. Bodleian Library, John Johnson Collection's Resources blog. http://ephemeraresources.blogspot.co.uk/2014/06/sarah-sophia-banks-collecting-ephemera.html

14 http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx

The Journals of Mrs Elizabeth Hervey

DIANNE BARRE

Knowing my interest in garden history, Liz Street, archivist at Staffordshire Record Office, asked if I might be interested in looking through the journals of a Mrs Hervey, who had created a garden from scratch at her new home in Acton, Middlesex. Thus I was introduced to Elizabeth Hervey (1748–1820), whose journals were written between 1792 and 1820. Of the original 117 journals, 72 survive, with a complete run for the period 1792–1802. Intended for her two sons, later in life she censored parts, as then did her surviving son William, so a few pages have been removed and paragraphs made illegible to remove 'anything that may seriously injure the living' [February 9 1815]. Otherwise they are an honest and frank account of her life, ill health, family, people she met, gossip, politics, contemporary events and her travels in England and Europe.

Only the European travel sections were intended for sharing outside the family. In 1816 she spent twenty-eight weeks travelling in France, visiting Paris, Versailles, Dijon, Evian and she also went to Germany. Two journals give full details of these journeys. She would have known parts of Europe well, having lived in Belgium with her husband, and she spent eleven months travelling in Portugal between January and November 1796, following the death there of her eldest son Thomas. (This latter was a private journal, for family only).

As a series these journals provide an insight into the daily life of a fairly wealthy woman, who was well-connected socially, knew

everyone who 'mattered', was highly intelligent, well educated, a published author, gardener, needlewoman and painter. In short they make fascinating reading.

Elizabeth's mother was Elizabeth Hamilton (1714–98) who married Frederick March/Marsh in 1747, and after his death (1752), Alderman William Beckford in 1756. From her father Elizabeth March inherited sugar plantations in Jamaica, and was therefore wealthy in her own right. This is possibly why her step-father Beckford organised her marriage to a Jamaican business associate, Alexander Harvie, who died in 1765, leaving Elizabeth a widow at the age of 17. As a young child she was bought up at Fonthill Splendens with her younger half-brother William Beckford. Theirs was to become an often difficult relationship, fully revealed in Elizabeth's journals.

In 1774 Elizabeth, at the age of 26 married Lt. Col. Thomas Hanmer/Hervey (1743–81), five years her junior**.** Hervey was the illegitimate son of the young Lady Elizabeth Hanmer following her notorious affair with Thomas Hervey MP, second son of the Earl of Bristol. Thomas officially took the name of Hervey the year he married Elizabeth. The details aren't certain, but it seems that Hervey ran through his wife's fortune, and the couple were in Belgium when he died in 1781. This left Elizabeth a widow for the second time at the age of 33, with two young boys, 'in deep mourning for poor Mr Hervey'. Theirs was clearly a love match, as every year Elizabeth Hervey commented sadly on the anniversary of her husband's death. His portrait miniature at Ickworth House, shows a handsome, if somewhat irresolute looking, young man.[2]

With so many topics to choose from in the journals, I have picked a handful which illustrate Mrs Hervey's ability to make concise and often arresting descriptions. She was to write six novels, but only the last *Amabel, or Memoirs of a Woman of Fashion*, was published under her own name in 1814. Both she and William Beckford shared a fluency with words and keen imaginations. However, unlike Beckford, she was able to take part in London society.

Mrs Hervey could paint a picture in a few effective words:

> 'I attended Divine Service [in Wales] which was particularly long owing to the Organist's choosing to indulge himself an unreasonable time in playing fugues.' [3 Aug. 1806]

Her short descriptions of people are masterly: 'Lord Fitzwilliam is a gentlemanlike man, but a mere courtier, always smiling, bowing and saying civil things, but rather insipid in conversation …' [5 Aug. 1792] She was of course a social snob, and describes an occasion: 'the Burns were there; his Br[other] is an underbred dull man, his sisters well enough. I avoided making any acquaintance with them.' [5 Feb. 1797] She found Mrs Benyon's party:

> 'a very disagreeable party: we were 14 at table-Sr F and Ly Sykes, he was tho' vulgar the best of the party, being very good natured. The other men were Mr Caswell and his wife, he a most conceited ostentatious fellow, two other men not worth mentioning.' [14 April 1799]

Also in 1799 she noted: 'Mr Middleton departed this morn: he may be worthy and good humoured, but certainly he is dull.' [15 Aug.] In 1807, staying with her son and daughter-in-law at their house in Oxfordshire, Mrs Hervey was condescending about Mr and Mrs Bennett, a clergyman and his wife who came to dinner:

> They are far superior to country folks, and have evidently been accustomed to good company. Indeed I understand they have a pretty place and a park in Surrey. He is a handsome man with beautiful teeth; she is not ill looking, but is rather disfigured by wearing of spectacles.

Yet she was honest enough to appreciate that she was irritated with those who were not as sophisticated as those of her own social world:

> 'I dare say she is a good sort of woman, but she and her friend have provincial manners, and no women amuse me, who have not superior information, or who are not at least acquainted with all that is going on in the world I live in.' [2 Aug. 1797]

Mrs Hervey's relationship with her servants is a whole separate topic, and she does not always appear in the best of lights. She was horrified to find that while she was away her servants had dared to read books from her library: 'a pretty thing indeed to have them thumbed by these fellows.' [15 Sept. 1807]

On 14 July 1812 Mrs Hervey went to Lady Corke's in the evening: 'My curiosity was gratified by meeting with Ld Byron the Poet, who gave himself en spectacle with Lady Car. Lamb playing the part of lovers most furiously.'[3] A few years later Byron impressed her [5 May 1815] 'Never was there a finer countenance than his, at first glance there appears a manly sort of seriousness in his aspect, wch lights up beautifully when he smiles, and his voice is enchanting. How delightfully he must read his own poetry!' She can then compare him favourably with another famous author she meets at a party three days later:

> Thus I saw the famous Walter Scott, and heard his voice, but he was uttering nothings; he is rather beyond middle-aged, plain and when he does not speak has a heavy countenance, but when discoursing he has an arch look with his eye. With Ld Byron I only exchanged a few words, but his head is charming, his voice and manner fascinating.

Subsequently, on 26 July 1815, Byron and his wife came to dinner at Mrs Hervey's:

> but he is shy and wants to be drawn out, and the whole trouble of this fell upon me, as she scarcely opened her lips, yet in a tête-a tête she is chatty enough. He is very modest; I therefore avoided talking of his works. He gives his opinions on persons very frankly, and he

> appears to be extremely humane and good natured. He spoke with tenderness of Napoleon's situation, and our sentiments perfectly coincided concerning hi … Now tho' I like both him and his wife very much, I became fatigued with sitting and talking and not walking the whole evening. If a 4th person had been here, it would have been a great relief to me'

However the following year, as she sees more of Lady Byron and became friendly with her, she learns of the Byron's separation and his thoughtless behaviour, both from rumours and from Lady Byron herself. On 6 June 1819 she 'went to Knightsbridge to see Ly Byron':

> She received me kindly with that calm peculiar to her disposition. Already grief and ill health have robbed her of the bloom of youth but at present she says she is much better. Ada is charming, one of the finest and liveliest of children. She knew me!

Mrs Hervey went to Court occasionally and the royal family knew that she was an accomplished flower painter. In 1795, over three months, she worked painting panels of flowers to be pasted onto the walls of the drawing room at her London house. Princess Elizabeth, herself a talented designer and painter of floral decoration, asked to see one of these panels. 'I disliked this amazingly, but at last fearing to offend such great Personages as the Queen and Princesses, I submitted and Lady Cathcart promised to return it in a couple of hours. I was in Agony 'till it came back which was not 'till after dinner.' [2 April 1795] At St James's: 'The Q never so gracious as to day, she repeatedly called me "my dear". In conversation Mrs Hervey says she has been at Fonthill:

> "Ah" said [the Queen] "There have very great works carrying on there. I have seen several of the Plans and the building is on a vast scale." I said very great indeed and that it would be very beautiful "Oh" said she, "I own my dear I think it frightful" … I persisted

> however in saying it would be magnificent but she smiled and shook her head. The King as usual talked of the weather.' [1 Feb 1798]

On 27 March 1800 she noted: 'The Q[ueen] said many gracious things about Acton [Mrs Hervey's villa], enquiring how many acres I hd. I told her and that it was a little bit of a place, no more than a Cottage. This I said for fear she might take it into her head to drive there some day.' When she completed a set of painted paper hangings for her library at Acton, Elizabeth noted tartly: 'At length between 3 and 4 the paper man arrived with eyes fixed, breath scented with gin, and such a thickeness of brain that I had great difficulty to make him comprehend what I wanted.' [7 Nov. 1799]

On the whole Mrs Hervey had few illusions about herself, and began an annual 'audit' on her birthday. Thus on her 49th birthday 22 August 1798: 'All remains of my youth are now vanished, my upper teeth are all loose in my head, my hair still very thick but grizzled, my constitution weak and my spirits very indifferent.' On 22 August 1805:

> I am now 57 years of age … According to custom I shall now take a review of myself physically and morally. I am little wrinkled but the loss of all my upper teeth alters the turn of my countenance even when I have artificial ones. My eyes still do without spectacles, but sometimes at night figures appear double and I read small print with difficulty by candle light but I work as well as ever. My hair is much thinner, having fallen of dreadfully since my illness.

In 1806 she wrote: 'Would to Heaven I could say I was become more pious and virtuous, but I fear that is not the case.' Self-centred yet often compassionate and thoughtful to others, with constant debilitating ill health (in 1798 she notes that her weight has fallen from 6st 12lb to 6st 6¾lb), relentlessly she made never-ending social visits in London and travelled round the country for months

at a time, retreating to her Acton villa with her own garden in the country for rest.

Her journals also disclose her relationship with her publishers, reactions to her novels, and snippets about actually writing: 'I invent with wonderful quickness' [July 1795]. Her descriptions of country houses, the Spas, the picturesque scenery in Lake District and Wales could well provide new information to researchers.[4] In short, Elizabeth Hervey is an undiscovered gem in her own right as well as being the half-sister of William Beckford.

1 Staffordshire Record Office, Lane family acquisition (2006), Ref. D6584/C/55-126. I am grateful for permission from the Archives to quote from Mrs Hervey's journals.

2 The miniature can viewed on line at: http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk. Inventory Number 851879. There are also portrait miniatures at Ickworth house of Mrs Hervey's son William (537979) and daughter-in- law (851913), but so far I have not discovered a portrait of Mrs Hervey herself. She mentions [3 Sept. 1812] that there was one of her painted when she was 21 (c.1769/70), and since she knew Cosway quite well, there could well be another later lost portrait.

3 Mary Boyle, Countess of Cork and Orrery (1746–1840) was a well-known Whig literary and political hostess.

4 The author is currently editing Mrs Hervey's descriptions of houses and gardens, with a view to making them more widely accessible.

The Fonthill Volunteers

MICHAEL RANSON

> All persons of a certain standing in life remember – for certainly nothing was ever more unforgettable – the great scarlet fever of England, when volunteering was the order of the day; when you could scarcely meet with a man who was not under some denomination or other a soldier … it was a fine ebullition of national feeling … of loyalty and public spirit, and cannot be looked back to without respect.[1]

By the end of 1792, the increasing violence of events in France, the country's apparent determination to spread its revolution to its neighbours and to occupy parts of the Low Countries made it inevitable that Pitt's essentially peaceable foreign policy could not for much longer be tenable. January 1793 brought the execution of Louis XVI and a state of war followed soon after. There were barely 15,000 regular troops in the United Kingdom, however, not only to meet any invasion but to maintain civil order at a time when there were certainly those in Britain who desired to imitate the revolutionary activities of the French. Furthermore, much of the Militia (a county-based, full-time territorial force raised by ballot, particularly in wartime) had undergone no training for years, and was thus essentially moribund.

It is against this background that a great patriotic upsurge which we shall call here the 'volunteer movement' burst into life. Essentially we are talking of citizens offering to form themselves into quasi-military bodies, to undergo basic training, and to be

at the disposal of the Government in the event of invasion or civil disorder. The first of such companies were formed by the parish of St George's, Hanover Square, London. The example of St George's was rapidly followed by a wave of similar patriotic proposals from all parts of the country, involving towns, parishes, and organizations such as the Inns of Court and East India Company. The Volunteer Act of March 1794 (34 Geo III) gave formal basis for these corps. Their existence was to be limited to the duration of the current war, and military discipline and pay were only to apply when units were mobilised to meet invasion or to support civil power. A particularly attractive 'perk' for a volunteer was exemption from the Militia ballot, provided there was regular attendance at training. Because the success of the volunteer movement depended greatly on local initiative, not least from landowners and other men of substance, these units were notable from the start for their individuality, not to say eccentricity. This was reflected in the design of uniforms and accoutrements, and many units were equipped with bands of music. At the same time a volunteer cavalry force, mainly county based, was also raised: known as the Yeomanry Cavalry, this was to become an enduring feature of British life.[2]

By 1797 Britain found herself in a situation which appeared ever more perilous as the year progressed. The First Coalition against France collapsed and Britain was isolated. There was growing revolutionary activity and frequent food riots. Dangerous naval mutinies took place at Spithead and the Nore. The Regular Army and the Militia remained seriously under strength. In December a French invasion of Ireland was only thwarted by the weather and indecisive French leadership. As a result, by a new Volunteer Act (38 Geo III Apr 1798), the Government called upon Lords Lieutenant to invite offers to form large numbers of new volunteer companies, similar in many respects to those which had been formed in 1794. These were to be open to any fit man between 16 and 60, with a captain, lieutenant and ensign to each, the latter two elected by ballot. There was to be at least one drill session every week, of three

hours duration, thus not making excessive demands on the limited free time of working men. Only on mobilization would military discipline apply. Initially only local duty was envisaged, but it was quickly recognized that these units would only be valuable if they could be called upon to serve more widely. Thus it was decided to offer pay for drill sessions (1/- per week for privates), and most importantly, exemption from the Militia ballot would be granted to men in units willing to take on wider geographical commitment in times of crisis. Most units soon responded by general consent to undertake to serve anywhere in their Military District, likely to be several counties in extent. These units were to prove an exceedingly popular social institution, uniting all classes in a common patriotic object. For those selected as officers, service could also bring enhanced social standing locally, at least in their own eyes, for HM's commission was hereby being made available to suitably qualified men not strictly defined as gentleman, including tradesmen, small businessmen and the like. Mitford amusingly recalls: '… I never forget the astonishment with which I beheld a field officer in his double epaulets, advance obsequiously to the door of a carriage to receive an order for five shillings worth of stationery.'[3]

William Beckford was not slow to respond to the Government's call for patriotic local initiatives. Indeed territorial service was not new to the Beckford family. Alderman Beckford had been an enthusiastic supporter of the Wiltshire Militia, in which he served as a captain between 1758 and 1762, under the command of its Colonel Lord Bruce.[4] His company had been made up of men from the hundreds of Damerham, Heystbury, Amesbury, Warminster, Downton, Dunworth and Mere. It had thus included men from the Fonthills, Hindon and Tisbury.

For Lords Lieutenant, traditionally responsible for all matters related to the Militia and any other reserve forces connected with their counties, implementing the Volunteer Act of April 1798 meant a very substantial work load, but one which most of them seem to have embraced with great energy.[5] The Earl of Pembroke, resident

at Wilton House, held the office of Lord Lieutenant for Wiltshire. His letter books, which largely survive intact for this period, contain great quantities of material relevant to the organization of the volunteer movement within the county, including numbers of references to the Fonthill Volunteers.

Beckford responded enthusiastically, and no doubt out of various motives. It would be unjust to deny him the motive of patriotism, but we must also note that he must have seen the call for sponsorship of volunteers as another opportunity to further his aim of restoring himself to a position of good standing in society. Furthermore, it must be recalled that he had only recently suffered a major setback in the pursuit of this aim. He had been involved in a well-publicized attempt to broker a peace between England and France, largely through the use of his agent Nicholas Williams as an intermediary, who had also been dispatched to Paris in order to obtain export licenses for works of art accumulated by Beckford. Williams had enjoyed the protection of the Directory, purchased it would seem by his patron, and had actually returned with proposals which Beckford had attempted to put before Pitt as a serious basis for peace negotiations. He had however suffered repeated snubs.[6]

It cannot be doubted that in the eyes of a ruling class substantially hostile to Beckford, these efforts would have been widely regarded with cynicism and distaste. His activities would have been put down to his desire for rehabilitation, as well as for facilitating the transfer from France of works of art, rather than a desire to serve his country. Nevertheless, to Beckford, fresh from recent disappointment over his peace initiative, the call for sponsorship of the volunteer movement by wealthy men in the counties must have seemed another opportunity to ingratiate himself on the county and national stage. Pembroke, who no doubt would have shared the general distaste of county society for Beckford, yet who would not have wished to turn down a potentially valuable patron of volunteer service, clearly found the whole matter of negotiating an appropriate outcome with the magnate of Fonthill something requiring tact and

firmness. Thus we find him writing from Wilton House to Secretary of State for War Dundas on 25 April 1798 as follows:

> Amongst other proposals I have received one from Mr Beckford of Fonthill...In answer to it I have written to Mr Williams his agent expressing my sorrow at not being able to accept his offer under the provisions of the Act and under the Instructions communicated to me in your letter of 6 April by which I am informed that Associated Corps of Foot are not to exceed 120 men, and are to be Independant Companies commanded each by a Captain, … (*but*) … I have stated to Mr Williams that I am willing to refer the offer to you if Mr Beckford wishes me to do it. Mr Beckford's plan is to extend his levy as far as Salisbury 14 miles from Fonthill and I think it right to suggest … whether it be proper, … to accept the offer of raising a Company in a Town at such a distance from him and where it would be particularly desirable to encourage Associations for its (Salisbury's) own local purposes under the command of its own qualified inhabitants.[7]

Pembroke goes on to caution Dundas against setting a precedent which would make it difficult to decline other such offers, even if on a smaller scale than Beckford's, which he notes is for a series of companies amounting to 950 men, and one which furthermore attempts to bring into the sole gift of Beckford the appointment of officers. He writes:

> In Mr Beckford's proposal it is stated that he is to recommend all the persons who are to officer the 950 men, and from a conversation I had with his agent I am led to suppose that he expects to be put in command of the whole …

This statement unfortunately admits of two readings, in that it can be understood as referring either to Williams or to Beckford himself, but it seems not unlikely that Beckford saw himself as the Lieutenant Colonel commanding the regiment-sized unit of his

somewhat extravagant dreams. In fact only a very small number of volunteer units approaching the size envisaged by Beckford were ever allowed. What is clear is that Beckford was attempting to hi-jack the volunteer movement by creating a force of a size and geographical area way beyond that envisaged by the Act. He hoped to get approval for this by offering to meet all the expenses other than provision of arms and ammunition. As in the case of his Abbey, this was to be a major statement. However, Pembroke had no intention of indulging the grandiose vision of his neighbour and on 7 May again wrote to Dundas. This letter raised additional objections to Beckford's plans:

> The Principal objections that strike me to Mr Beckford's offer are that in every particular of his Plan he deviates from the regulations … to which all those who have yet offered their services have been obliged to adhere. It proposes to limit the offer of service to within twenty miles of his House, whereas all other Country Associations are subject to serve to the extent of their Military District. He has formed the companies of fifty men only, whereas all Companies are required to be of at least 60 men. He proposes to interfere with the Towns of Salisbury and Mere, confounding thereby Town and Country Associations together, which are to serve under distinct Conditions, the former 14 miles from Fonthill which he means as the centrical rendezvous of his district and the other 9 miles from it. In both of these towns meetings of the inhabitants have been held and resolutions of raising Associated Corps have been passed.

Pembroke may well have suspected that Beckford was someone who would override the regulations in any way he could in pursuit of his own plans, which certainly seemed to imply a certain hubris, indeed an attempt to exploit the volunteer movement for purposes of self aggrandizement. Whatever may be the truth concerning Beckford's motives, it is clear that Pembroke was determined to force him to act within the confines of the regulations, or to abandon his plans altogether. There was to be no regiment-sized unit, neighbouring

towns were not to be courted, and they were to be left to form their own local units which would benefit from local spirit and the convenience of easy assembly. Furthermore, if any unit were to be formed at Fonthill, it must be available to serve throughout the Military District, in this case covering the counties of Wiltshire, Hampshire and Dorset.

Pembroke was clearly anxious to avoid setting a precedent by according Beckford any special treatment. He observed to Dundas, one suspects at the same time allowing a little sarcasm to creep in:

> … little do I perceive the justice of granting an Indulgence to one which is denied to another. I have every reason to suppose that Mr Beckford's offer originates in a desire to give a liberal and public spirited support to the voluntary defensive measures now putting into execution … and … conceiving that I am not mistaken in the origin of this offer, it must be more eligible to lend his assistance in the mode that has been universally approved of and as yet, is the only one which is deemed admissible.

His final observation before he goes onto report approvingly on the proposals of Salisbury, which was to have three companies, seems somewhat contradictory, for after first commenting upon the 'prodigious' number of Beckford's employees he then dismisses the possibility of his raising the number of recruits necessary to realize his more grandiose imaginings:

> In point of numbers I am inclined to think that Fonthill (where I understand Mr Beckford now employs a prodigious number of Workmen within his Grounds), Hindon, Tisbury and Knoyle could not produce within very many of the Volunteers, Pioneers etc mentioned in the return of his proposed plan, [ie for the unit of 900] without great encouragement on his part.

Pembroke must have received a reply from London in early May, and one which appears to have entirely supported his analysis of the

problem of dealing with the somewhat troublesome incumbent of Fonthill, for he was able to write to Williams on 12 May telling him that the formation of the proposed Fonthill unit might proceed, but only if all his (ie Pembroke's) recommendations for a much smaller and more flexible force be followed:

> I have received a letter from Mr Secretary Dundas which enables me to send you an answer to Mr Beckford's offer of Services. He has suggested to me the propriety of recommending to Mr Beckford in the first place to simplify his offer by first separating from it all that does not relate to an armed force, such as the management of Pioneers, Carts, Wagons etc. In the next place to modify his proposals in forming only one Armed Corps, to consist of persons whose associations and Places of Residence would enable them to meet once a week for training … Should Mr Beckford judge it expedient to adopt these Modifications to his Plan I have every reason to believe Mr Dundas will readily submit it to HM, but in its present shape he cannot feel himself at liberty to proceed, particularly as from the great number of local Corps that have … agreed to … extending their Service to any part of the Military District in which they reside should it be required …

Here it must be borne in mind that the Government was only prepared to grant pay and exemption from the Militia Ballot to those newly-formed corps ready to serve beyond their immediate vicinity in time of crisis. Clearly Beckford had not been initially prepared to give this undertaking, indicative of his determination to keep his 'private army' under his own close control, a determination also shown in his apparent wish to have sole rights of nomination of officers.

Beckford appears to have decided to accept the advice offered to Nicholas Williams by Pembroke, for on 24 May Williams submitted a detailed proposal to the Lord Lieutenant which was duly forwarded to Dundas. Clearly Pembroke had carried the argument on all points. The preamble makes it clear that only

two companies, each of sixty men, are to be raised, they are to be available to serve throughout the Military District, and there is no mention of Beckford holding military rank at any level. Williams expressly confirms adherence to the Regulations, as recommended by Pembroke.[8]

There follows a nominal roll giving full names, places of abode, occupation and ages of the 120 men who are to serve in the Fonthill Volunteers (*see* APPENDIX I). To the end of the document is attached a statement, signed by Beckford, in which he undertakes to meet much of the cost of the proposed force. By giving this undertaking, Beckford was committing himself to outgoings which to many a lesser man would have seemed significant. The main expense he would be incurring would be that of uniform. Given that Government guidance was that the basic necessities could be provided for 13/4d per man, this would represent a sum of at least £78, but Beckford would probably not have stinted on this matter, and so his outlay would no doubt have been greater. If he wanted a band, then this would represent a substantial additional expense. There would have been a further ongoing cost, for rank and file were entitled to one shilling per drill parade, amounting to £6 weekly. It is easy to see why he should have felt entitled to a substantial measure of personal control over the force he was sponsoring.

One of the most striking points of the roll is that the unit includes, among a large number of professions, 27 carpenters, 24 labourers, 14 masons and 4 plasterers. It seems fair to assume that a large proportion of these were working on the new Abbey. It is unsurprising that significant numbers of Beckford's own workforce should have 'volunteered'. But no great pressure was probably needed, as this was a communal and patriotic endeavour that brought a small payment, and more significantly to skilled tradesmen, exemption from the militia ballot. Many other occupations are represented but none in anything approaching the same numbers. These include most of those to be expected in small villages like the Fonthills, and larger ones like Tisbury and Hindon.

Numbers amongst these may well have been employees of Beckford (and almost certainly the 4 gardeners as all lived in Fonthill Gifford), others would have been working for others or on their own account. One may surmise that some of the carpenters, masons and labourers would not have been local residents as such, but rather lodging locally in order to work on the Abbey.

It would appear that the revised proposal for the Fonthill Volunteers was found acceptable by Pembroke, and in due course by Dundas. Indeed, on 14 June Pembroke forwarded the names of the candidates proposed to be commissioned as officers in various Wiltshire units, including the Fonthill volunteers. These were to be Nicholas Williams, (Captain), Michael Burroughs Esq (Lieutenant) and Mr W Clark (Ensign), the latter to be replaced in 1799 by Thomas Alkinson Esq. All would have had to fulfill a significant property qualification.[9]

From his military title it would appear likely that Nicholas Williams, Figure 1, had previous military experience (possibly in the Militia); this is implied by the fact that Beckford addresses him as Captain in a letter of 12 October 1796, sometime before the creation of the Fonthill Volunteers.[10] If Williams did indeed have relevant experience this may account for the apparently rapid formation of a functioning unit once approval had been obtained. Clearly the Fonthill Volunteers were formed into a coherent body very quickly, for they were able to take part in the funeral of Alderman Beckford's widow, who was buried at Fonthill in July 1798. *The Gentleman's Magazine* recorded:

> At the Lodge the Fonthill Volunteers, ranged on each side of the road, received the procession with reversed arms, drums muffled, fifes bound round with black crape, and playing the Dead March in Saul.[11]

The Volunteers also figure at several points in the Order of Procession which is given in the report. It appears the drill may have

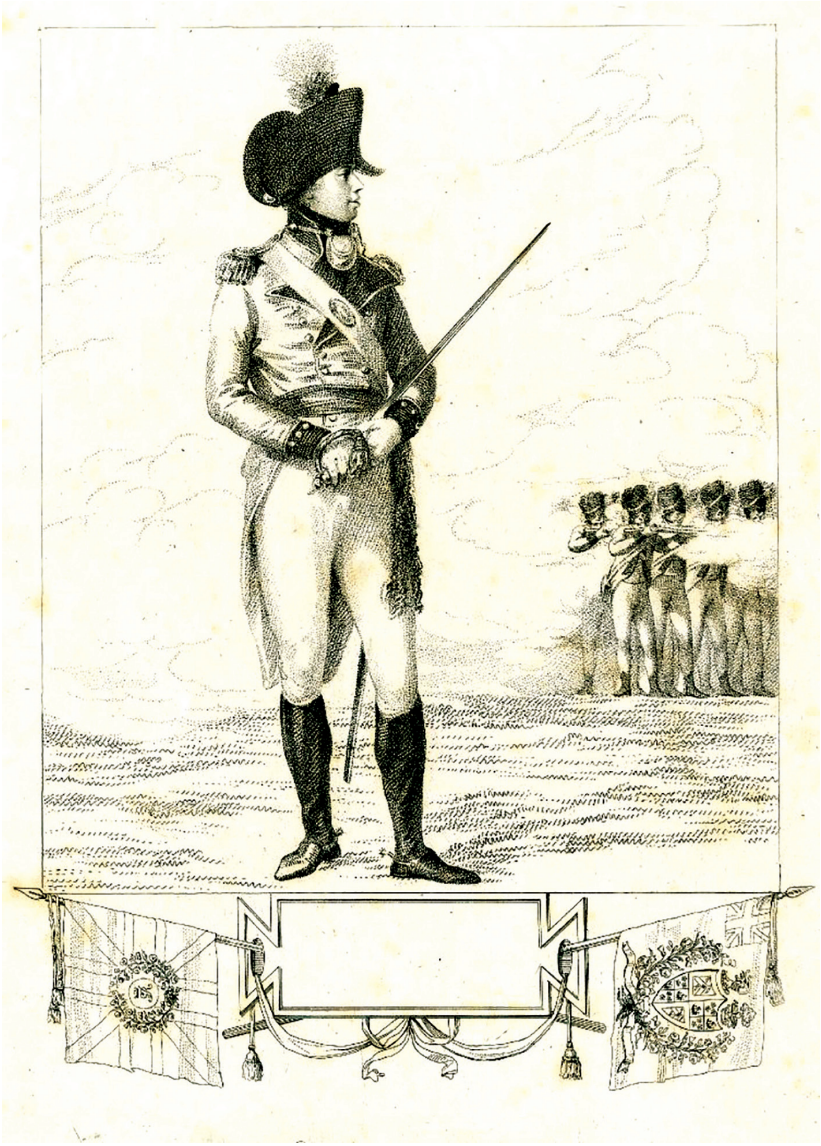


Fig. 1. *Captain Nicholas Williams of the Fonthill Volunteers.*
Unpublished print with blank dedicatory panel by P W Tomkins, Oct 1800.
© Trustees of the British Museum.

been of a respectable standard, for we do have a most interesting reference in the journal of Elizabeth Hervey, William Beckford's half sister, who stayed with her brother at Fonthill only one month later in August 1798. After dinner-where she describes Nicholas Williams as being dressed 'en militaire' she records the following exchange with her brother:

> … the drums beating for my brother's Troop to exercise. I expressed a wish to go and look at them… I immediately expressed my admiration of the good order and appearance of his men considering they had been so lately taught the exercise of arms. "It is no wonder at all," said he harshly, "I do this differently from other people." "I see" cried I, "but yet the time has been short." "That's nothing, these men have been picked out of 1500, and whatever I choose to do, is done that instance." "Well" said I, "they do great credit to your choice."[12]

The subsequent day-to-day history of the Fonthill Volunteers is not recorded, but there is note of some key events. One of these was the presentation of colours, which did not take place until September 1799. It is described by the Revd Lettice:

> … next Sunday is appointed for Miss Beckford's presentation of the colours to the Fonthill Volunteers. I have been writing a speech for her and an answer to it from the commanding officer of the corps. My business on the plain, where the ceremony will take place will be to consecrate the banner. May the day be fine or I shall exhibit no very fine colour myself.[13]

Certainly this Divine's taste was for the floreate and obsequious style so popular in the eighteenth century amongst those anxious to please their patrons. Lettice spares no hyperbole in the production of an appropriate script for so momentous an occasion, and his efforts survive complete as they were reproduced in *The Times* on 7 October 1799:

On Friday 4th October the Fonthill Volunteers were drawn up on the lawn before the mansion, where a stand of colours were presented to them by Miss Beckford, who delivered them into the hands of Capt Williams, the commanding officer, with the following speech:-

Sir, in delivering this banner into your hands, as Captain of the Fonthill Volunteers, I commit its honour and defence to a respectable corps, embodied under my father's auspices, inhabitants of this neighbourhood, and breathing his own sentiments of patriotism and loyalty.

On yourself, your brother officers, and a body of men so worthy of your command we may confidently rely for the unsullied preservation of this distinguishing ensign. Were not, Sir, that gallantry of spirit, which marks your own character, so well known as to allow us to augur from it all the influence of example, that alacrity with which every individual of this association is remembered, at the first call, to have offered his service, whenever summoned to action, will want no other incentive to exertion than the cause of their country and the defence of their Sovereign.

The cause of our warfare is the cause of every rank in society; it may therefore be the destination of your brave Volunteers to rally round the standard I have presented to them, as well before the door of the cottage as the gate of the palace. But in whatever situation their service may be engaged, I fear not to presage, that no member of this corps will quit his colours but with his life.

To which Capt Williams replied – Madam, too proudly did I feel the distinction of being appointed to command the Fonthill Volunteers, to believe, that my elation of heart would easily be increased, till this moment, in which I partake, with every member of the corps, the honour you have conferred in presenting us this banner … I read in every countenance of my fellow soldiers a laudable emotion of pride, inspired by this splendid ensign … etc.

After noting their duty to protect their homeland not only from external enemies, but also "if so monstrous a supposition be admitted, even from domestic enemies", Williams, possibly scripted by Lettice, took care to remind all present of the great personage to

whose largesse all this was due. Referring to the colours he went on:

> Placed beneath the (Royal) crown, you observe the arms of the family under whose patronage you are embodied, and through whose loyal liberality we have been instructed in military discipline … Though we cannot look upon this ornament of our banner without recollecting the ancestors of this house, who have fought or bled for the Crown, or given proof of their manly zeal in support of the state, we must regard the standard itself, which bears this emblem, with more peculiar feelings of respect and gratitude towards the present representative of these families, whilst it reminds us that his Sovereign cannot boast a more loyal subject, the Constitution a sincerer friend, the great cause in which the nation is engaged a more zealous contributor to its success, or ourselves, my fellow soldiers, a more generous patron and protector.
>
> … The ceremony was preceded by a feu de joie, and several military manoeuvres performed with great precision; after which the officers and the whole corps were handsomely entertained.

Just in case the reader should have been left in any doubt as to the exceptional generosity and worthiness of Mr Beckford, two explanatory footnotes follow the article, possibly inserted at the prompting of Williams:

> It deserves to be known that at the time the great alarm was given by Ministers to the Country, and whilst Mr Dundas' Act was yet in the House, Mr Beckford's offer to Government of raising Volunteers for its defence, was amongst the very first of its kind: nor should it be suppressed, that this offer was that of an entire regiment of 950 men; which it was thought proper to refuse. The present Corps, consisting with officers of 153 members was raised, armed, cloathed, and instructed in their discipline entirely at his own expense.

We saw above that the volunteers turned out very soon after their formation in order to play their part in the funeral ceremonies for

William Beckford's mother. A far more celebrated occasion in which they played a prominent role was the visit to Fonthill of Admiral Nelson, in company with Sir William and Lady Emma Hamilton in December 1800. A full report of the events and the appearance of the Volunteers appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine*:

> As soon as they (the Admiral's party) reached the lodge of the park, the Fonthill Volunteers, already waiting, drew up in a double line. Their band of music consisting of thirty performers, playing 'Rule Britannia', the Corps presented their arms, and marched on either side of the carriages in slow procession up to the house. Here Mr Beckford with a large company of gentlemen and ladies, received Lord Nelson and his party … the Volunteers now formed into a line upon the lawn in front of the house, and fired a feu de joye, whilst the band played God Save the King. The day which had been thick and foggy, cleared up just before the Admiral's arrival; so that this military parade and salute, under the command of Captain Williams were performed with admirable effect … the procession of carriages passed through woods of pine and fir, illuminated with inumerable lamps hung in the trees, and by flambeaus moving with the carriages; they proceeded betwixt two divisions of the Fonthill Volunteers, accompanied by their band playing solemn marches, the effect of which was much heightened by the continued roll of drums placed at different distances on the hills.[14]

The presence of a band of thirty players, FIGURE 2, in addition to the strength of some 120 rank and file, cannot be passed over without remark. Whilst nothing has been found relating to the Fonthill Volunteers band, a good deal is known about similar bands in the late eighteenth century.[15] Regular battalions had long had bands, and in the latter part of the century militia regiments increasingly created them as well. The Wiltshire Militia, in which the Alderman had served, was early off the mark, starting a band in 1769, which appears to have been largely financed by Lord Bruce the commanding officer, and fellow officers. Officers contributed

Fig. 2. A side drum of the Fonthill Volunteers. Illustration by kind permission of the owner, Mr Richard Miles.

generously to bands, including the purchase of instruments. Bruce we know paid 24/6d per week to his bandmaster, and the further costs of the band were over £50 per annum. As volunteer units were created in the 1790s, many appear to have acquired 'bands of music', as they were known. These would similarly have been financed by the officers, and particularly by the prosperous individual or organisational sponsors of such units. These bands were exceedingly popular with all ranks, for they built up pride and brought a pleasurable aspect to drill parades. The gentry rapidly saw that in addition to their military value, bands could be most

welcome additions to their grand receptions and festivities, and this made them all the more content to pay for the services of the musicians. Thus everyone was happy.

Where did the musicians come from? Some would have been professionals of one sort or another, but the majority local amateurs of the same class who provided music in the galleries of village churches, and at the festivals which marked the agricultural year. Gallery bands were increasing in size and popularity in the late eighteenth century. As for the drummers, at least one would have been on the strength, like the drill sergeant, and paid by the Government. Furthermore, some gentlemen would have had professional musicians on call for functions, and these would hardly have refused to serve in their patrons' military bands. We know a good deal about some volunteer bands. That of the Frampton on Severn Volunteers, a unit similar to the Fonthill Volunteers, had 4 clarinets, 2 horns, 2 bassoons, and a bass drum. A triangle and 2 octave flutes were also available, plus fifes and side drums. The band of the Marlborough Volunteers in 1804 comprised 1 flute, 3 clarinets, 1 horn, 1 bassoon, 2 fifes, 3 side drums, a triangle and a bass drum. Flutes and serpents also figured in similar bands. What seems clear however, is that the Fonthill Volunteers, at 30 musicians, at least on the occasion of Lord Nelson's visit, was substantially bigger than those of most similar-sized units, But this is unsurprising, as everything Beckford did was on a grand scale, and it may be that its size was inflated for such a special occasion. In Beckford's case too, the proximity of Salisbury possibly enabled him to draw on a pool of professional musicians there.

There is one additional and intriguing point which can be made on the subject of the band. We know that many volunteer units commissioned marches of their own. It would not be surprising if the Fonthill Volunteers had such a march, nor entirely surprising if it was the one previously composed by Beckford in 1781 and which appears in the collection of his compositions published in 1999.[16]

But by the time this lavish parade of the Fonthill Volunteers took

place, their days were already numbered. Two factors were crucial. Firstly by the end of 1800 negotiations were underway with France which eventually resulted in the Peace of Amiens, thus removing for a time the threat of invasion. Secondly, the health of Beckford's agent and captain of the Volunteers, Nicholas Williams, was in such decline that in April 1801 Williams wrote to Lord Pembroke expressing his desire to resign his commission. Pembroke duly forwarded this letter to Lord Hobart, the successor to Dundas at the War Office, with a request for advice as to how to proceed;

> I have received a Letter from Nicholas Williams Esq Capt of the Fonthill Volunteer Company which is clothed and payed by Mr Beckford apprising me that owing to a bad state of health he finds himself unequal to the execution of the duties of that situation, and as Mr Beckford is averse to the Company being put under any other person's Command, he Mr Beckford is determined on the dismissal of the Company at the end of the present Month …

Pembroke sent a holding reply to Williams on the same day:

> Sir, having no Authority either to accept the resignation of any Commission granted by the King, or to sanction the reduction of any Corps I have only to say in answer to your letter of the 26th giving notice of Mr Beckford's very immediate intentions that I will take the first opportunity of stating the contents of your letter to the Secretary of State for His Majesty's information.

On 23 May 1801 Pembroke was in a position to write to Nicholas Williams as follows:

> … I have received a letter from the Secretary of State to say that he shall lay before the King your resignation of the Commission you hold, whenever it is officially communicated to him through me, and that the Corps will be considered disbanded from that period, unless Mr Beckford should recommend some other person to me to

command it in your room. In the case of the Corps being disbanded I shall of course send in the resignation of the subaltern officers' Commissions.

Clearly Beckford felt no inclination to change his mind on the matter, and so the Fonthill Volunteers ceased to exist in the early summer of 1801. Many similar companies survived, or were revived upon the resumption of war in 1803, although all to be absorbed by 1808 into more formal regiment-sized units of local militia. There is no evidence of Beckford taking any further interest in the movement. Whether Beckford would have wished to maintain his unit but for the illness of Williams can only be a matter of speculation. Clearly he had felt close personal ownership of the Fonthill Volunteers, so much so that he could not apparently contemplate any other nominee commanding them. Maybe the Fonthill Volunteers had failed to fulfill his wider hopes of social re-integration. The most mundane explanation would simply be that with the coming of peace there seemed no point continuing with a now – unnecessary expense. One must recall that he had, atypically, borne the full cost. However, one is still left with a certain feeling of surprise that such a man as he was so ready to dispose of this rather splendid martial backdrop to his grand entertainments.

The only further communication in the Pembroke letter books relating to the Fonthill Volunteers is a note dated 15 June 1801 stating 'Nicholas Williams late Captain of the Fonthill Volunteers has received directions to communicate with the Ordnance Department with respect to the restitution of the Arms issued for the use of the Company.'

Nicholas Williams died in December 1801. He is buried in the churchyard of Fonthill Bishop.

The author would like to thank Sidney Blackmore for his valuable assistance.

APPENDIX I

FONTHILL VOLUNTEERS: PROPOSAL FOR FORMATION MUSTER ROLL 24 MAY 1798

The National Archive, Home Office/Volunteers etc. as:
HO 50/345

'We the undersigned Inhabitants of the Parishes of Fonthill Gifford, Fonthill Bishop, Tisbury, and the town of Hindon within the Division of Hindon, in the County of Wilts, do hereby agree to form into a Corps on Infantry under the command of Nicholas Williams Esq for the defence of the said County, in pursuance of an Act passed in this present Session of Parliament, entitled "An Act to Enable His Majesty more effectually to provide for the Defence and Security of the Realm during the present War, and for indemnifying Persons who may suffer in their Property by such Measures as may be necessary for that Purpose", And we do engage to be trained and exercised at least once a Week, and for not less than three Hours at a Time, and in the case of Invasion, or the actual appearance of the Enemy on the Coast, to serve within the Military District to which we belong, namely Wilts, Hants and Dorset.

Witness our hands at Fonthill the twenty fourth Day of May 1798

	Name	**Place of Abode**	**Occupation**	**Age**
1	Nicholas Gaulton	Tisbury	Sadler	25
2	Jonathan Giddons	"	Grocer	23
3	William Cross	"	Carpenter	18
4	John Snook	"	Butcher	16
5	Edward Gunstone	"	Glazier	18
6	James Cantlo	"	Baker	24

7	William Sheppard	“	Breeches Maker	24
8	Lot Howell	“	Thatcher	26
9	Henry Wilkins	“	Smith	30
10	Henry Snook	“	Butcher	23
11	John Holloway	“	Butcher	29
12	Andrew Alford	“	Yeoman	30
13	John Bracher	“	Carpenter	23
14	Edward Gerrard	“	Glazier	22
15	Robert Mitchell	“	Mole catcher	37
16	James Alford	“	Yeoman	28
17	James Clinch	“	Labourer	27
18	Francis Mullins	“	Miller	27
19	Samuel Blandford	“	Dairy Man	20
20	Job Aldridge	“	Mason	30
21	William Foil	“	Carpenter	20
22	John Oborne	“	Painter	20
23	William Turner	Fonthill Gifford	Yeoman	55
24	George Farratt[?]	“	Smith	30
25	George Hooper	Hindon	Mason	38
26	John Hooper	“	Mason	42
27	William Jones	“	Hardware Man	26
28	Thomas Beckett	“	Cooper	34
29	John Beckett	“	Cooper	20
30	George Redmond	“	Surgeon	20
31	Thomas Stevens	“	Labourer	55
32	William Stevens	“	Inn keeper	29
33	Francis Hacker[?]	“	Carpenter	21
34	Joseph Miles	“	Labourer	22
35	James Taylor	“	Butcher	28
36	John Smith	“	Labourer	27

37	Francis Harding	“	Taylor	17
38	William Ranger	“	Malster	25
39	Edward Shergold	“	Smith	36
40	John Glanville	Tisbury	Carpenter	28
41	Thomas Lawrence	Hindon	Carpenter	38
42	John Giddings	“	“	28
43	Edward Silverthorn	“	“	37
44	[?] Ballard	“	“	24
45	F Hacken [?]	Fonthill	“	25
46	William Blandford	Fonthill	“	25
47	Uriah Woolcott	Hindon	“	50
48	George Gouldin	“	“	25
49	Thomas Fountain	Fonthill Gifford	Plaisterer	31
50	James Harmon	Fonthill Bishop	“	26
51	Barnaby Power	Hindon	“	34
52	Richard Brook[?]	Fonthill Bishop	Carpenter	34
53	Joseph Howell	Hindon	“	39
54	John Oborne	Tisbury	Carpenter	38
55	Robert Oborne	“	“	41
56	William Oborne	“	“	19
57	William Wix	Hindon	Sawyer	22
58	Edward Trueloc	“	“	20
59	James Norton	“	“	31
60	James Dean	Fonthill Gifford	Carpenter	22
61	John Day	Hindon	Labourer	20
62	William Becket	“	Carpenter	28
63	John Gough	“	Bricklayer	29
64	Edward Bracher	“	“	23
65	Benjamin Mullin	Tisbury	Carter	34
66	Edward Gillingham	“	Mason	43

67	Adam Aldridge	“	Labourer	28
68	John Anderson	“	“	36
69	Samuel Howell	“	“	21
70	Edward Ranger	“	Wheelwright	23
71	John Target	Hindon	Labourer	24
72	James Harding	Hindon	Taylor	19
73	Humphrey Price	Tisbury	Mason	37
74	William Whitehead	Hindon	“	27
75	John Whitehead	“	“	31
76	William Uttley	“	“	24
77	Thomas Bell	Fonthill Gifford	“	25
78	William Mead	“	“	34
79	Joseph Cuff	Hindon	Sawyer	24
80	William Wilkins	Tisbury	Labourer	29
81	Thomas Mould	Fonthill Gifford	Labourer	31
82	Thomas Beckett	Hindon	Sawyer	31
83	William Marsh	Tisbury	Mason	22
84	John Ashman	“	Carpenter	45
85	William Winkworth	Fonthill Bishop	“	23
86	John Lithgow	Fonthill Gifford	Gardener	27
87	James Paterson	“	“	22
88	John Lucas	“	“	21
89	Jacob Nisbeck	“	“	19
90	Thomas Stevens	Hindon	Shepherd	32
91	Alexander Goodwin	Tisbury	Labourer	30
92	Thomas Snow	Fonthill Gifford	“	45
93	John Hacker	“	Mason	45
94	N Dorrington	Hindon	“	40
95	James Nisbeck	Fonthill Gifford	Shoemaker	43
96	Robert Gilbert	“	Yeoman	41

97	William White	Hindon	Labourer	31
98	M Osmond	Tisbury	"	19
99	Nicholas Lovet	Fonthill Gifford	"	42
100	Jos Cool	"	"	17
101	James Small	"	"	18
102	William Lovett	"	"	18
103	John Lovett	"	"	21
104	Philip Beckett	Hindon	Sawyer	48
105	John Adams	"	Labourer	20
106	Richard Gibbon	"	Carpenter	35
107	James Harvey	"	"	43
108	Walter Becket	"	"	21
109	J Taylor	"	Plaisterer	25
110	John Brown	"	Labourer	28
111	James Woolcot	"	Carpenter	20
112	William Read	Tisbury	Labourer	24
113	William Abbrey	Hindon	Mason	22
114	Daniel Ingram	"	Carpenter	31
115	Joseph Alford	Tisbury	Yeoman	25
116	James/John Rogers	"	"	28
117	William Turner	Fonthill Gifford	"	23
118	John Mould	"	Labourer	41
119	William Turner	Tisbury	Yeoman	43
120	William King	"	"	19

I Nicholas Williams do at the request of the Subscribers, agree to accept the Command of the Volunteers for the Parishes of Fonthill Gifford, Fonthill Bishop, Tisbury and the Town of Hindon, and I beg leave to recommend Michael Borrough Esq, to be appointed Lieutenant, and Mr M Clark to be appointed Ensign of the said

Corps, and I hereby declare that I am seized and possessed of such an Estate, either in possession or beneficiary, for my own Use and Benefit, consisting of Lands, Tenenments and Hereditaments, within the County of Wilts, as doth qualify me to act as Captain of the said Corps … Witness my hand … *Nicholas Williams*

Government furnishing Arms and Acoutrements and the usual quantity of ammunition for the use of this Corps, and appointing a Drill Serjeant and a Drummer, I do engage to clothe the whole and to defray all other expenses … Witness my hand … *William Beckford'*

[Author's Analyses]

Residency of 120 Fonthill Volunteers
(excluding officers, drummer, drill sgt.)

Tisbury – 43; Hindon – 50; Fonthill Gifford – 22;
Fonthill Bishop – 3; Fonthill (unspecified) – 2

Occupations of Fonthill Volunteers

Carpenters: 27; Taylors: 2; Breeches makers: 1; Labourers: 24;
Bricklayers: 2; Grocers: 1; Masons: 14; Sadlers: 1; Bakers: 1;
Yeomen: 9; Millers: 1; Innkeepers: 1; Sawyers: 6; Painters: 1;
Thatchers: 1; Plaisterers: 4; Hardwaremen: 1; Mole catchers: 1;
Butchers: 4; Surgeons: 1; Carters: 1; Gardeners: 4; Wheelwrights: 1;
Shoemakers: 1; Coopers: 2; Shepherds: 1; Dairymen: 1;
Glaziers: 2; Smiths: 3; Malsters: 1

1 M. R. Mitford, *Our Village*, London: 1824. Folio Society, abridged,1962, 326-35

2 C. Sebag-Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Forces,* London: Archibald Constable & Co Ltd., 1908

3 Mitford, op. cit.

4 For the Alderman's militia service, *see*: P. Gauchi, *William Beckford*, Yale: Yale University Press, 2013, 98-112

5 For the role of Lords Lieutenant, *see* J. W. Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army 1803–1814,* London, Macmillan, 1909

6 Bodleian Library, MS. Beckford, c. 15, ff 37-80

7 All cited correspondence from Pembroke: P*embroke Letter Books,* Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office, WRO 2057, f4/11 and series

8 Public Record Office, HO 50/345,1

9 The property qualification was income of at least £50 per annum from land owned within the county, or the renting of land worth £100. Sons of men so qualified were exempt.

10 Boyd Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, London: Centaur Press 1962, 59

11 *Gentleman's Magazine,* August 1798

12 *The Journal of Elizabeth Hervey*, Staffordshire Record Office, DC6584/C/82. 18 August 1798

13 Bodleian Library, MS. Beckford, c. 15, f 20

14 *Gentleman's Magazine*, December 1800

15 M. J. Lomas, 'Militia and Volunteer Wind Bands in Southern England in the late Eighteenth Century and early Nineteenth Centuries', *Journal for Army Historical Research, Vol LXVII,* Autumn 1989, 154-66

16 *Beckford Edition*, Michael Maxwell Steer. (msteer.co.uk)

Serendipity in Tunbridge Wells

STEPHEN CLARKE

Hall's Bookshop has long been a feature of the town of Tunbridge Wells. It was founded 120 years ago, and for most of its existence it has occupied its present corner site behind the Church of King Charles the Martyr, just off the Pantiles. A few years ago it was taken over by the firm of Adrian Harrington, and a visit in January 2016 produced a modest but pleasing discovery.

I have often wondered what possessed Beckford in 1812 to relax the shroud of secrecy surrounding the Abbey and allow the engraver James Sergeant Storer to publish his illustrated account *A Description of Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire. Illustrated by Views, drawn and Engraved by James Storer.* The lead publisher was Beckford's own bookseller, William Clarke of New Bond Street, and Beckford no doubt not merely consented but facilitated and encouraged the initiative. The book with its frontispiece, six plates, and concluding vignette of the Oratory, provides an important account of the state of the Abbey before construction of the eastern wing, and ten years before all the publicity that attended the auction view and sale to Farquhar of 1822.

Then in 1823, the year of the sale conducted by Harry Phillips for Farquhar and of the rival accounts of John Rutter and John Britton, Storer with his eldest son Henry Sergeant Storer brought out *The Portfolio; a Collection of Engravings from Antiquarian, Architectural, & Topographical Subjects, Curious Works of Art, &c. &c. with Descriptions*. It was published by Nonnaville & Fell and Sherwood, Jones & Co. in four volumes, consisting of between 25

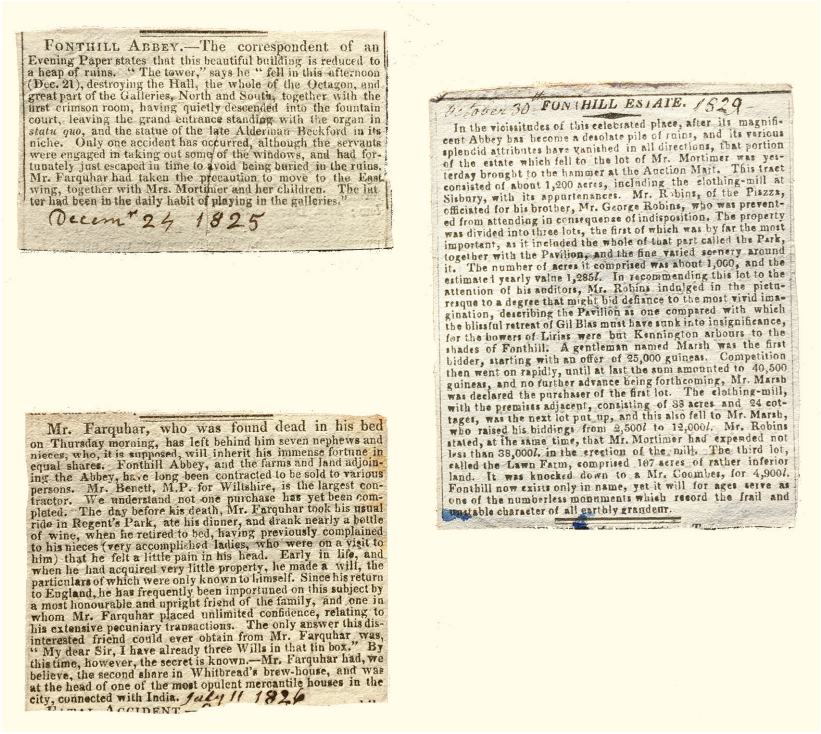
and 40 short articles in each volume, illustrated with one or more copper engravings – and the first article in the first volume was a new account of Fonthill. It was illustrated with eight plates, three of them similar views to the 1812 *Description* re-engraved, five of them new, but none of them as finely finished as the earlier engravings. The text is an abbreviated version of that of the Description, the order inverted to give an account of the Abbey and its interior before rather than after describing the grounds, but also reflecting the further building works that had been carried out in the intervening eleven years.

This is all familiar territory, and is recorded in Jon Millington's *William Beckford A Bibliography* (2008). My modest discovery in Hall's Bookshop was an attractively bound copy of the first two volumes of the *Portfolio* with the contemporary armorial bookplate of James Bonnell Esq. – the two volumes bound as one, but without the third and fourth volumes – out of which spilled some old newspaper cuttings. There were six of them, one of them undated but concerning the poet Paul Whitehead and Lord Le Despenser – the other five all dated and relating to Beckford.

These five cuttings are here reproduced, FIGURES 1-2, with such commentary and identification as I have been able, with the assistance of the British Newspaper Archive and *The Times* online, to add to them:

December 24 1825: the collapse of the tower of the Abbey. Newspaper unidentified—this is not *The Times* article of the same date, which is headed "From an Evening Paper" and consists of a letter signed J.F., but it quotes from that letter.

July 11 1826: the death of Farquhar. This is from the *Globe*, p. 4, and carries identical text to *The Times* article of the same day, but with different type-setting, a different article below, and no rules above.


FONTHILL ABBEY.—The correspondent of an Evening Paper states that this beautiful building is reduced to a heap of ruins. "The tower," says he "fell in this afternoon (Dec. 21), destroying the Hall, the whole of the Octagon, and great part of the Galleries, North and South, together with the first crimson room, having quietly descended into the fountain court, leaving the grand entrance standing with the organ in *statu quo*, and the statue of the late Alderman Beckford in its niche. Only one accident has occurred, although the servants were engaged in taking out some of the windows, and had fortunately just escaped in time to avoid being buried in the ruins. Mr. Farquhar had taken the precaution to move to the East wing, together with Mrs. Mortimer and her children. The latter had been in the daily habit of playing in the galleries."

Decem^r 24 1825

Mr. Farquhar, who was found dead in his bed on Thursday morning, has left behind him seven nephews and nieces, who, it is supposed, will inherit his immense fortune in equal shares. Fonthill Abbey, and the farms and land adjoining the Abbey, have long been contracted to be sold to various persons. Mr. Benett, M.P. for Wiltshire, is the largest contractor. We understand not one purchase has yet been completed. The day before his death, Mr. Farquhar took his usual ride in Regent's Park, ate his dinner, and drank nearly a bottle of wine, when he retired to bed, having previously complained to his nieces (very accomplished ladies, who were on a visit to him) that he felt a little pain in his head. Early in life, and when he had acquired very little property, he made a will, the particulars of which were only known to himself. Since his return to England, he has frequently been importuned on this subject by a most honourable and upright friend of the family, and one in whom Mr. Farquhar placed unlimited confidence, relating to his extensive pecuniary transactions. The only answer this disinterested friend could ever obtain from Mr. Farquhar was, "My dear Sir, I have already three Wills in that tin box." By this time, however, the secret is known.—Mr. Farquhar had, we believe, the second share in Whitbread's brew-house, and was at the head of one of the most opulent mercantile houses in the city, connected with India. July 11 1826

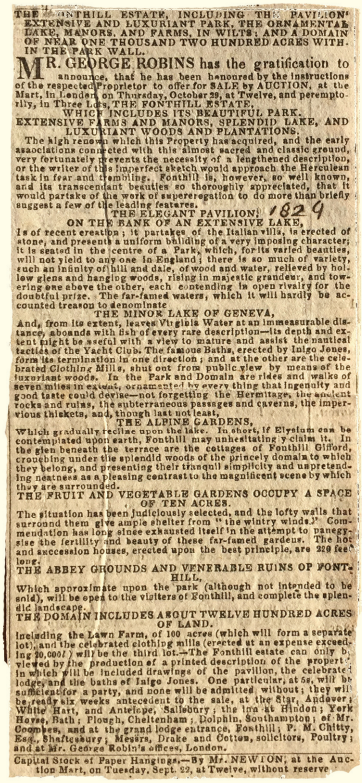
October 30th FONTHILL ESTATE. 1829

In the vicissitudes of this celebrated place, after its magnificent Abbey has become a desolate pile of ruins, and its various splendid attributes have vanished in all directions, that portion of the estate which fell to the lot of Mr. Mortimer was yesterday brought to the hammer at the Auction Mart. This tract consisted of about 1,200 acres, including the clothing-mill at Sisbury, with its appurtenances. Mr. Robins, of the Piazza, officiated for his brother, Mr. George Robins, who was prevented from attending in consequence of indisposition. The property was divided into three lots, the first of which was by far the most important, as it included the whole of that part called the Park, together with the Pavilion, and the fine varied scenery around it. The number of acres it comprised was about 1,060, and the estimated yearly value 1,285*l*. In recommending this lot to the attention of his auditors, Mr. Robins indulged in the picturesque to a degree that might bid defiance to the most vivid imagination, describing the Pavilion as one compared with which the blissful retreat of Gil Blas must have sunk into insignificance, for the bowers of Lirias were but Kennington arbours to the shades of Fonthill. A gentleman named Marsh was the first bidder, starting with an offer of 25,000 guineas. Competition then went on rapidly, until at last the sum amounted to 40,500 guineas, and no further advance being forthcoming, Mr. Marsh was declared the purchaser of the first lot. The clothing-mill, with the premises adjacent, consisting of 33 acres and 24 cottages, was the next lot put up, and this also fell to Mr. Marsh, who raised his biddings from 2,500*l* to 12,000*l*. Mr. Robins stated, at the same time, that Mr. Mortimer had expended not less than 38,000*l*. in the erection of the mill. The third lot, called the Lawn Farm, comprised 167 acres of rather inferior land. It was knocked down to a Mr. Coombes, for 4,900*l*. Fonthill now exists only in name, yet it will for ages serve as one of the numberless monuments which record the frail and mutable character of all earthly grandeur.

Fig. 1. Three of the newspaper cuttings.

1829 [no further date given]: George Robins advertisement for the sale of the Fonthill Estate. This is an untraced variant of the advertisement placed by Robins in *The Times* on 26 October 1829, and no doubt in other journals.

October 30 1829: Fonthill Estate. Newspaper unidentified—this is not the article in the *Morning Post*, which refers to 40,300 guineas (here at the end of the 22nd line 40,500), and two lines below has variant wording in relation to the second lot, the freehold clothing mill, nor the differently worded article in *The Times*.



THE FONTHILL ESTATE, INCLUDING THE PAVILION,
EXTENSIVE AND LUXURIANT PARK, THE ORNAMENTAL
LAKE, MANORS, AND FARMS, IN WILTS; AND A DOMAIN
OF NEAR ONE THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED ACRES WITH-
IN THE PARK WALL.

MR. GEORGE ROBINS has the gratification to announce, that he has been honoured by the instructions of the respected Proprietor to offer for SALE by AUCTION, at the Mart, in London, on Thursday, October 28, at Twelve, and peremptorily, in Three Lots, THE FONTHILL ESTATE.

WHICH INCLUDES ITS BEAUTIFUL PARK,
EXTENSIVE FARMS AND MANORS, SPLENDID LAKE, AND
LUXURIANT WOODS AND PLANTATIONS.

The high renown which this Property has acquired, and the early associations connected with this almost sacred and classic ground, very fortunately prevents the necessity of a lengthened description, or the writer of this imperfect sketch would approach the Herculean task in fear and trembling. Fonthill is, however, so well known, and its transcendant beauties so thoroughly appreciated, that it would partake of the work of supererogation to do more than briefly suggest a few of the leading features.

THE ELEGANT PAVILION, 1829
ON THE BANK OF AN EXTENSIVE LAKE,

Is of recent creation; it partakes of the Italian villa, is erected of stone, and presents a uniform building of a very imposing character; it is seated in the centre of a Park, which, for its varied Beauties, will not yield to any one in England; there is so much of variety, such an infinity of hill and dale, of wood and water, relieved by hollow glens and hanging woods, rising in majestic grandeur, and towering one above the other, each contending in open rivalry for the doubtful prize. The far-famed waters, which it will hardly be accounted treason to denominate

THE MINOR LAKE OF GENEVA,

And, from its extent, leaves Virgil's Water at an immeasurable distance, abounds with fish of every rare description; its depth and extent might be useful with a view to mature and assist the nautical tactics of the Yacht Club. The famous Baths, erected by Inigo Jones, form an termination in one direction; and at the other are the celebrated *Clothing* Mills, shut out from public view by means of the luxuriant woods. In the Park and Domain are rides and walks of seven miles in extent, ornamented by every thing that ingenuity and good taste could devise—not forgetting the Hermitage, the ancient rocks and ruins, the subterraneous passages and caverns, the impervious thickets, and, though last not least,

THE ALPINE GARDENS,

Which gradually recline upon the lake. In short, if Elysium can be contemplated upon earth, Fonthill may unhesitating y claim it. In the glen beneath the terrace are the cottages of Fonthill Gifford, crouching under the splendid woods of the prince's domain to which they belong, and presenting their tranquil simplicity and unpretending neatness as a pleasing contrast to the magnificent scene by which they are surrounded.

THE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE GARDENS OCCUPY A SPACE
OF TEN ACRES.

The situation has been judiciously selected, and the lofty walls that surround them give ample shelter from "the wintry winds." Commendation has long since exhausted itself in the attempt to panegyrise the fertility and beauty of these far-famed gardens. The hot and succession houses, erected upon the best principle, are 320 feet long.

THE ABBEY GROUNDS AND VENERABLE RUINS OF FONT-
HILL,

Which approximate upon the park (although not intended to be sold), will be open to the visiters of Fonthill, and complete the splendid landscape.

THE DOMAIN INCLUDES ABOUT TWELVE HUNDRED ACRES
OF LAND,

including the Lawn Farm, of 100 acres (which will form a separate lot), and the celebrated clothing mills (erected at an expense exceeding 30,000*l.*) will be the third lot.—The Fonthill estate can only be viewed by the production of a printed description of the property, in which will be included drawings of the pavilion, the celebrated lodges, and the baths of Inigo Jones. One particular, at 5*s.*, will be sufficient for a party, and none will be admitted without; they will be ready six weeks antecedent to the sale, at the Star, Andover; White Hart, and Antelope, Salisbury; the Iron Bridge, Hindon; York House, Bath; Plough, Cheltenham; Dolphin, Southampton; of Mr. Coombes, and at the grand lodge entrance, Fonthill; Mr. Mc Chitty, Esq., Bedford-row; Messrs. Drake and Coates, solicitors, Poultry; and at Mr. George Robin's offices, London.

Capital Stock of Paper Hangings.—By Mr. NEWTON, at the Auction Mart, on Tuesday, Sept. 22, at Twelve, without reserve

Mr. Beckford, it is strongly rumoured about Bath, is likely to leave his beautiful residence and grounds there, for the Continent. His Tower, on Lansdowne-hill, which has attracted so much notice, and which may be seen for so many miles in every direction, was long closed against any sort of exhibition; but recently Mr. Beckford has somewhat relaxed in the severity with which he rejected strangers. It is now occasionally shown to those who may be so fortunate as to gain cards. The lower part of the Tower consists of two stories; the rooms are not large, but they are splendidly and peculiarly furnished with books, bookcases, cabinets, rich paintings, &c. Above them is a wide and admirably-completed geometrical staircase, which leads to the summit, and whence, as well as from the rooms, the views are perhaps the richest, as they certainly are the most variegated and beautiful, to be experienced in any part of the country. *Septem^r 11 1830.*

Vice-Admiral Sir Edward Codrington left London on the 3d instant for St. Petersburg, to express, personally, to his Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Russia, his grateful sense of the gracious manner in which he has been pleased to evince his approbation of the Admiral's conduct when in command of the allied squadrons in the Mediterranean. Sir Edward intends to return to England next month. Some papers seemed to fear that the memorial from Vice-Admiral Sir E. Codrington, for a grant on account of the battle of Navarino would meet with an "untoward" reception. We are, however, happy to hear that the memorial *to the King*, presented by the Admiral himself, in the last month, was graciously received, and considered to deserve serious attention. Those who had the honour of serving under the Gallant Admiral on the 20th of October, 1827, will thus see that, although he refused, in April 1829, 800*l* per annum, as a pension for his own services (offered in person by the Duke of Wellington), he has not forgotten the claims of the Officers and men who supported him on that memorable day.—*Plymouth Journal.*

Fig. 2. Two of the newspaper cuttings.

September 11 1830: Beckford rumoured to be leaving Bath. This appeared in the *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, p. 3, and I at least am not aware of other references to such a suggestion (though it is known that Beckford had aborted a hastily projected trip to Italy in 1826, getting no further than London).

No doubt a more thorough survey of contemporary newspapers would run the untraced cuttings to earth, but as it is they illustrate the extent to which news items were freely copied between journals.

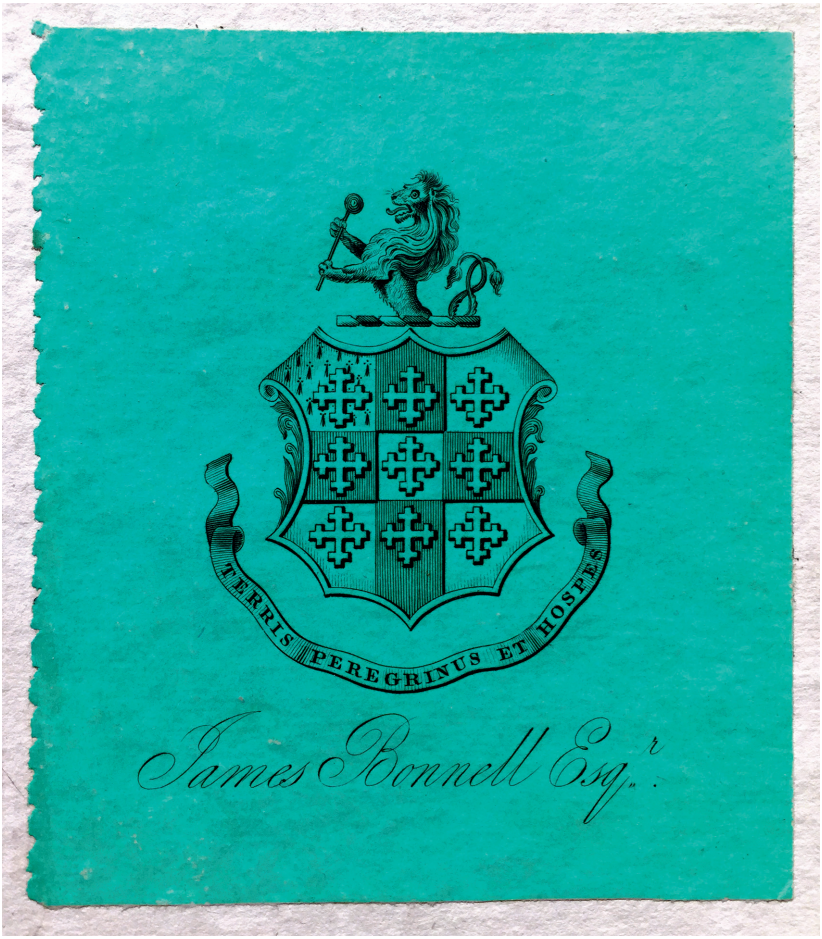


Fig. 3. Bookplate of James Bonnell.

Was it James Bonnell who compiled the cuttings? From the appearance of his bookplate, Figure 3, he appears to have been an early owner of the book, and all the cuttings are dated within seven years of the date of the book's publication. He was of the Bonnell family of Pelling Park, Old Windsor, who are recorded to have had contact with members of the Royal Family at nearby Frogmore

House, being visited there by Queen Adelaide. But his exact identity is not wholly clear: James Bonnell, formerly Beal, who adopted the name and arms of Bonnell in 1774 by Royal Licence, had lived at Pelling Place—the plate dated 1800 in Angus's *Seats of the Nobility and Gentry* is entitled "Pelling Place in Berkshire, the Seat of James Bonnell, Esq." However, that James Bonnell died in 1815, eight years before *The Portfolio* was published. The property then passed to his widow, and on her death in 1841 to Mary Anne Harvey, who in that year assumed the additional name and arms of Bonnell. The 1851 census records that she was living at Pelling Park with her unmarried cousin James Bonnell, described as a Fund Holder aged 42, and he subsequently inherited the estate from her. It is possible that he was the James Bonnell who was the owner of the book, though he would only have been fourteen when it was published, and between 16 and 21 when the newspaper cuttings appeared. We cannot tell whether he might have bought the book with the cuttings in them, or perhaps come across them and preserved them later, but the cuttings do at least illustrate the continuing interest for contemporaries of the doings of the Caliph of Fonthill.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Thomas Woodcock and Sidney Blackmore towards the identification of James Bonnell and the Bonnell family.

Michael Briggs (1926–2017) and Beckford's Tower: an appreciation

LISA WHITE

Vision, courage and determination. These three qualities Michael Briggs had in abundance throughout his long life, and never were they needed more than during his twenty years' (1986–2006) as Chairman of the Bath Preservation Trust. From his appointment as a trustee in 1970, he championed valiantly the cause of conservation against the post-War forces of destruction of Bath's architectural heritage, and through the Bath Preservation Trust's Revolving Fund, secured the purchase, restoration, conversion and successful onward sale of many threatened heritage gems, including 2-2A Abbey Green, houses in Monmouth Street, and Ralph Allen's Cottages on Prior Park Road. In 1984, a couple of years before Michael became Chairman but much promoted by him, the Trust acquired and subsequently restored and converted, the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel in the Vineyards, along the Paragon, into a showcase museum of architectural heritage and best conservation practice. Its charming 'Strawberry Hill' Gothic style, rare among Bath's Georgian buildings, held a particular appeal for Michael, who with Isobel led such a lively family and social life at Midford Castle.

The combination of Michael's business skills, interest in romantic Gothic revival architecture and valuable experience with the Trust's building conservation projects led him, almost inevitably, to the most complex and expensive challenge faced during his

Chairmanship: the conservation of Lansdown Tower, known to us more familiarly as 'Beckford's Tower'. This was a lengthy process, and its history may be well known to some members of the Beckford Society, but deserves recognition in this tribute. Dr and Mrs Leslie Hilliard, had purchased the Tower in 1972 and in 1977 with a Declaration of Trust and Deed of Gift transferred ownership, with an endowment, to the Beckford Tower Trust. Skilled wording of the 1977 Trust Deed was crucial to the later success of the Tower as a museum and heritage asset, for the purposes were defined as to

a) preserve and maintain for the public benefit the buildings, features and objects of historical and architectural interest relating to the life and work of William Beckford of Fonthill and in particular Beckford's Tower.
b) maintain the Beckford Museum collection at present in the Tower as a public museum;
c) educate the public in the life and work of William Beckford.

The coincidence of these purposes with those of the Bath Preservation Trust allowed, in 1993, with enthusiastic backing from Michael, for the latter to become sole Trustee of the Beckford Tower Trust and thus provided a firm financial and charitable foundation for a major conservation project of Bath's famous landmark, first approved in principle in 1997. Michael's powerful and persuasive character, his personal friendships with trustees of other major grant-givers, his selection (with his Trustees) of outstandingly able professionals in Theo Williams (1924–2008) and Caroe and Partners of Wells, and of his 'in-house' team including Peter Woodward, Sophie Jeffries (Lady Scruton) and Jesca Verdon-Smith (Scott) meant that an application to the relatively newly established Heritage Lottery Fund became a possibility. The project, FIGURE 1, carried out between 1999 and 2001 and requiring a total of £750,000, was funded by a grant of £462,500 from the HLF, donations from the Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust, the Pilgrim Trust, the

Fig. 1. Michael Briggs, Jesca Verdon-Smith, and Peter Woodward at the topping-out ceremony, Beckford's Tower, 22 December 1998.

JMR Charitable Trust, the J Paul Getty Jr. Charitable Trust and the Garfield Weston Foundation, and other lively fund-raising efforts, including the memorable Masked Ball in Queen Square in September 1997.

Michael's personal friendship with Sir John Smith (1923–2007) and their shared ideals about the preservation of historic buildings of character (and not just stately homes) led rather naturally to the leasing in 1999 of an apartment in Beckford's Tower to the Landmark Trust, which has become such a successful holiday let, provides a steady income for the maintenance of the Tower and introduces many people to the history of William Beckford. Again, Michael's personal friendship with James Lees-Milne (1908–1997) led to the latter's bequest of books from William Beckford's library to the Beckford Tower Trust.

At the same time, Michael secured protection of the setting for

Beckford's Tower by working with Bath and North East Somerset local authority over the conservation and improvement of the Lansdown Cemetery and the wider landscape – though once again, this is threatened by substantial building development of the former MOD Ensleigh site opposite the Tower.

Hardly surprising, therefore, that the conservation and restoration of the Tower earned a Civic Trust Award in 2002, and the Royal Fine Art Commission's 'Building of the Year Award for Restoration' in the same year. However Michael's enthusiasm for Beckford did not cease with the end of the building conservation project, for during the last four years of his chairmanship he worked for the successful acquisition of significant works of art from Beckford's former collection for display in the museum rooms of the Tower, supporting Dr Amy Frost in her energetic fund-raising for a handsome mahogany cabinet from Beckford's house in Lansdown Crescent, an elegant tripod pedestal from the Tower's Crimson Drawing Room in 2003 and the marble console table from the Vestibule in 2004, Figure 2. He was delighted by the acquisition of

Fig. 2. Marble console table, originally in the Vestibule.

one of Beckford's elegant hanging cabinets in 2007, the year after his retirement.

Beckford's Tower symbolises much of Michael's achievement as Chairman of the Bath Preservation Trust, but we should also remember his successes with so much more – the Trust's campaigns in many planning battles, the protection of the city's skyline, the establishment of one of the country's best architectural museums, a creative partnership with the Herschel House Museum, the Trust's education programmes, and the legacy of a powerful 'voice' for the Bath Preservation Trust in planning and building conservation into the 21st Century. My personal recollections of him are equally powerful: he was tough, often uncompromising, handsome, hard-drinking, utterly charming – and a thrilling dancing partner at the Beckford Ball in Queen Square.

Dennis Brickles, *Beauty and Glory*

Oakdale Books, 2016, pp. 308

A Review by MALCOLM JACK

Carnal desire, jealousy, ambition, cruelty and love: all these swirling human passions motivate the glittering cast of characters in Dennis Brickles' novel *Beauty and Glory*, set in late eighteenth-century Naples and Sicily during a turbulent period of revolution and war. If Emma Hamilton at first appears to be the heroine – and she is certainly the go-between linking the doddery aesthete, Sir William Hamilton, the coldly ambitious Horatio Nelson and the elusive William Beckford – the real hero of the story is Niccolo Brandisi, a handsome and charming young Neapolitan serving in the fabulous Palazzo Sessa, Sir William's home and storehouse for his vast collection of classical *objets*. Niccolo had been a great favourite of Lady Catherine, the envoy's first wife (whom William Beckford adored) but it is his unfortunate fate to become the plaything of Emma as she turns from one prey to another on her ascent to grandeur. Niccolo has a sensitive, loving nature and is shy – in a scene of would-be seduction by Beckford, he turns away – it is a temptation easily resisted by the Caliph since Niccolo is a fictional invention of the author, cleverly used to bring his plot along.

The drama of Emma's intrigues, Nelson's seething ambitions and the tolerance of Sir William Hamilton in accepting life in a *ménage à trois* are set against the historical background of extreme violence in Naples as the French invading armies approach and a republic is declared. Some of the best scenes in the novel are set in the ruins of Republican Naples where the hapless Niccolo seeks out his brother, a revolutionary priest, on a spiritual as well as emotional quest, with fatal consequences.

William Beckford makes appearances throughout the various twists of the tale, sometimes in Naples, sometimes in Fonthill, always pursuing his collecting mania and musical passion. His elusive character is never entirely pinned down – perhaps it cannot be – but a sensitivity and empathy for those suffering portrays him in a more favourable light than has sometimes been the case in cooler assessments.

Brickles' book is an enjoyable romp which is to be savoured as much for its portrayal of the brittleness of the human condition as for its occasional moments of exquisite pathos.

Notes on Contributors

DIANE BARRE is a garden historian. Her PhD supervisor was Professor Timothy Mowl at Bristol University, for whom she then researched gardens in Staffordshire in *his Historic Gardens of England s*eries (2008). She has just published *Historic Gardens and Parks of Derbyshire* (2017), and is now researching Georgian ladies and their gardens. Mrs Hervey is a delightful distraction, yet has proved to be a 'gardening lady' in her own right.

SIDNEY BLACKMORE has been Secretary of the Beckford Society since its foundation in 1995. He was a foundation trustee of the Beckford Tower Trust, and contributed two essays to the catalogue *William Beckford 1760–1844: An Eye for the Magnificent* (Yale University Press, 2001).

STEPHEN CLARKE is the Chairman of the Beckford Society. He is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and an Honorary Research Fellow of the University of Liverpool. He is also a trustee of Strawberry Hill, of the Lewis Walpole Library at Yale University, and of Dr. Johnson's House in Gough Square. His research interests centre on Horace Walpole, William Beckford, book history and the history of collecting. His most recent book is *The Selected Letters of Horace Walpole* (2017), which he has edited for Everyman's Library.

MALCOLM JACK is President of the Beckford Society. He has written on Beckford's time in Portugal, *William Beckford: An English Fidalgo*, (1996) and edited *The Episodes of Vathek* (1994). His books include a history of Sintra (*Sintra: A Glorious Eden*, 2002) and one of Lisbon (*Lisbon: City of the Sea*, 2007). He was appointed visiting professor of Enlightenment Studies at Nanyang Technological University,

Singapore in 2015. His book on Travellers to the Cape of Good Hope will be published in 2018. He was appointed KCB in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 2011.

MICHAEL RANSON spent most of his career in the Royal Army Educational Corps where he was a lecturer in International Politics and Strategic Studies, including some years at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. Now retired, his research interests include the Royal Navy in the eighteenth century. He lives at Tisbury, close to Fonthill, which has stimulated his interest in William Beckford and the wider Beckford family. He is also a member of the Sydney Smith Society.

LISA WHITE is a furniture historian and lecturer. She is Editor of the Furniture History Society Journal. From 2004–2011 she directed the Attingham Summer School for the Study of Historic Houses and was a member of the National Trust Arts Panel from 2006, and its Chairman from 2010-16. She trained and worked as a curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. From 1985–1999 she taught at the University of Bristol, and continues to lecture for the V & A, the University of Bath, and University of Buckingham. From 1999–2006 she was Curator of Decorative Art at the Holburne Museum, Bath, and curatorial advisor to the Herschel House Museum, Bath. In 1990 she published *The Pictorial Dictionary of Eighteenth Century British Furniture Design* (Antique Collectors' Club) and has written many articles on the history of British furniture.