



COMMEMORATIVE MEDALS OF ALDERMAN BECKFORD

When writing about these medals in the 2004 *Beckford Journal*, I mentioned that the *Sentimental Magazine* awarded silver medals as prizes, perhaps as many as six in any given month. They would have been uniface, with the reverse being replaced by the name of the recipient. If any were issued bearing the portrait of Alderman Beckford, none are known to have survived. However, a notice, 'Some Selected Reports', in the *Bath Journal* of 29 March 1773, stated that: 'Those persons who are desirous of having any of the Medals given in the Course of this work. Struck in Gold, Silver, &c. may, by applying to the Publisher, be supplied with

them on the most reasonable Terms'. Would a twelve-year-old Beckford have been tempted to order some gold or silver medals of his father? None have appeared so far. But a 'silvered' medal turned up recently. It was made of Barton's metal, where copper was sandwiched between sheets of silver. It is thought that John Kirk, who produced the medals for the *Sentimental Magazine*, may have retained the dies and struck the medals at a later date. The present example is very worn, and looks as if the lettering on the reverse has been stamped into the silver rather than being raised, as in the regular copper medals.

JOHN MILLINGTON

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Items of Beckfordian interest are always welcome.

THE BECKFORD NEWSLETTER



NO 38 - MARCH 2013

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
SATURDAY 8 JUNE 2013

KEATS HOUSE, HAMPSTEAD



'I sho'd like to employ Caleph Vathek to kick him'.

Letter from John Keats to J H Reynolds, 25 March 1818,
concerning the tedious curator of the cottage where Burns was born.

AGENDA AND BOOKING FORM ENCLOSED

BECKFORD SOCIETY LECTURES

Work is in hand to produce the third volume in our Beckford Lectures series. This will contain the lectures for 2007 – 2010.

As printing and postage costs have increased considerably over recent years, this will be the final volume in the series. In future, lectures will be printed in *The Beckford Journal*, starting with the lecture given last year by Professor Caroline Dakers, which will appear in this year's issue.

WEBSITE

Additions are gradually being made to our website. Recent Newsletters are available on the site, where the illustrations appear in colour.

www.beckfordsociety.org.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members are reminded that the annual subscription is £20/30E/\$25.

Members with UK bank accounts are encouraged to pay by standing order as this saves us sending reminders when subscriptions are due.

We are happy to receive payment by Sterling or US Dollar cheques, by bank transfer, or PayPal. Further information about payment can be found on the website.

PORTUGAL

Sadly, due to lack of support our excursion to Portugal this May had to be cancelled. However, we are planning a tour next year. Information about this will be available in time for the A.G.M. and will be circulated with the next Newsletter. If you are interested in receiving advance information, please let the Secretary know.

He considers William Beckford in a chapter entitled 'The Hell of Ownership: Beckford on Collecting'. Beckford's writings offer critical insights into capitalism that arise from the fraught dependence of immediate, individual taste on the now of the market, perpetually setting prices for all commodities. Among the works he examines is Beckford's *L'Esplendente* with its character of an acquisitive, isolated man of taste and passionate collector, the Duke D'Arcos, 'surrounded by Poets – Musicians – Sculptors - & Designers who lost & gained by turns the empire of his Mind'. Noggle opines that Beckford points the way forward for taste in the centuries to come.

NEWGATE PRISON

According to Kevin Grovier in his account of London's notorious Newgate Prison, the foundation stone for George Dance's building was laid by the Lord Mayor, Alderman Beckford, on 31 May 1770.

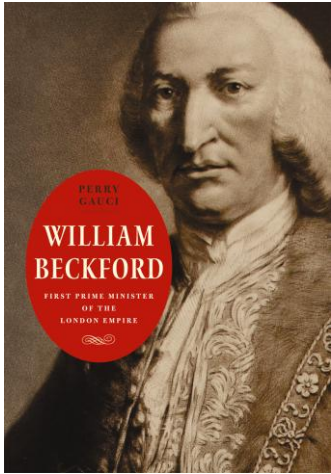
Kevin Grovier, *The Goal: The Story of Newgate – London's Most Notorious Prison*, London: John Murray, 2008.

A LITTLE READING

'Having nothing to look at except a dreary plain bounded by barren, uninteresting mountains, I was reduced to tumbling over the trashy collection of books with which I happen in this journey to be provided: poor fiddle-faddle Derrick's *Letters from Cork, Chester and Tunbridge*; John Bunce, *Esquire's, Life*, holy rhapsodies and peregrinations; Shenstone's, Mr Whistler's, and the good Duchess of Somerset's *Correspondence*; Bray's *Tour*, right worthy of an ass; Heely's fulsome description of the Leasowes and Hagley; Clarke's ponderous account of Spain, and Major Dalrymple's dry, tiresome and splenetic excursion. There's a set, equal it if you can! I hope to get a better at Madrid and throw my old stock in the Manzanares'.

William Beckford, Monday 10 December 1787, from *the Journal of William Beckford in Portugal and Spain 1787-1788*. (Hart-Davis, 1954), 285-286. Boyd Alexander, in a note, comments that Beckford kept all these books, which were sold a century later by his descendants in the Hamilton Palace Sale.

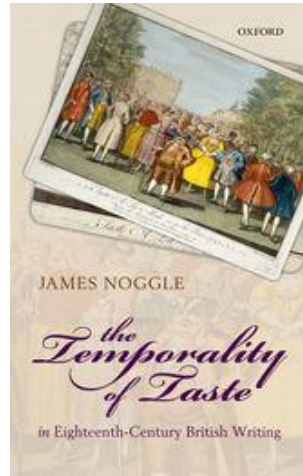
WILLIAM BECKFORD.
FIRST PRIME MINISTER
OF THE LONDON EMPIRE



This first-ever biography of Alderman Beckford will provide a unique look at eighteenth-century British history from the perspective of the colonies. Beckford was one of the few politicians to have experienced imperial growing pains on both sides of the Atlantic, and his life offers a riveting look at how the expanding empire challenged existing political, social and cultural norms.

Perry Gauci, *William Beckford. First Prime Minister of the London Empire*. Yale University Press, 2013. Will be available in USA in May, and in UK from June.

THE TEMPORALITY OF
TASTE



Is taste a quick momentary experience in the individual mind? Or something durable, shaped by slow, historical processes, affecting groups of people differently at different times and places? British writers in the eighteenth century believed that it was both. Focussing on works in many genres, including Alexander Pope's poetry, David Hume's historiography, and novels by Fanny Burney, James Noggle's *The Temporality of Taste in Eighteenth-Century British Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) sees the divided temporality of taste as an unpredictable force in British writing.

AGM 2013

Our A.G.M. on Saturday 8 June will be held in London at Keats House, Hampstead. This was the home of John Keats from 1818 to 1820, and is the setting that inspired some of his most memorable poetry. Here, he wrote 'Ode to a Nightingale', and fell in love with Fanny Brawne, who lived next door.

The building was purchased by public subscription in the 1920s and given to Hampstead Council. In 1988 the City of London assumed responsibility. A programme of conservation work started in 1999, and in 2007 the house received a Heritage Lottery Fund award for internal restoration which also created greater space for the display of the collection.

Members may like to be reminded that there are two National Trust houses in Hampstead. Fenton House, a 1686 townhouse, brimming with decorative and fine art collections, including a fine group of early keyboard instruments.

Close to Keats House, is 2 Willow Road, the 1930s house of the architect Ernö Goldfinger.

An Agenda and booking form are enclosed with this Newsletter

KEATS AND BECKFORD

John Keats had read *Vathek*, as the quotation on the front cover of this Newsletter shows. Scholars over the years have detected the influence of *Vathek* on Keats's writing, in particular, in the creation of the Titans' underworld in 'Hyperion'.

Keats's friend John Hamilton Reynolds was related, through his mother, to the Hamilton family, and Cyrus Redding, Beckford's first biographer, produced an early edition of the poetical works of Coleridge, Shelley and Keats (Paris: Galignani, 1829) which included a 'Memoir of John Keats'.

FONTHILL DAY

Following the success of the A.G.M. visit to Fonthill last year, the Beckford Tower Trust is organising a Fonthill day for Beckford Society members on Saturday 25 May.

The day is likely to include a morning walk around the lake and afternoon trip to the remains of Fonthill Abbey. Further details and cost will be confirmed soon. To find out more and book a place, please contact Dr Amy Frost on 01225-460705 or at beckford@bptrust.org.uk

FONTHILL OLD ABBEY ESTATE OPEN DAYS

There are further opportunities to visit the Fonthill Old Abbey Estate this summer, when Stephen and Benetta Morant hold two open days in aid of local charities. On Sundays 19 May and 23 June. 12.00 pm – 5.00 pm, each day. Light refreshments will be available.

BECKFORD LECTURE 2013

This year's Beckford Lecture will be given on Tuesday 19 November by Charles Sebag-Montefiore F.S.A. The lecture at the Travellers Club, London SW1, will be followed by dinner.

Mr Sebag-Montefiore is a director of Ludgate Investments Limited having previously worked for other corporate financial companies. He is a Trustee of the National Gallery, Honorary Treasurer of the Friends of the National Libraries and other charities. He is Joint Secretary of the Society of Dilettanti and Treasurer of the Roxburghe Club. He is joint author (with James Stourton) of *The British as Art Collectors* (2012).

IN THE SALEROOM



William Beckford's carp pattern Chinese export teapot was sold at Christie's, London on 27/28 Nov 2012 (lot 839) for £39,650.

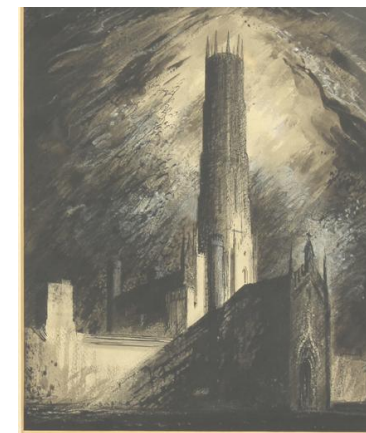
The silversmith James Aldridge used a Chinese export porcelain teapot and added engraved silver mounts to create an exotic object, with the concept of the engraved carp 'swimming' around the underside of the cover mount and along the spout.



A George III mahogany hall bench, in the manner of Marsh and Tatham, the frieze with a painted heron's head

crest, was sold at Sotheby's in London on 4 December 2012 for £12,500 (including buyer's premium).

JOHN PIPER'S FONTHILL



John Piper's illustration Fonthill (based on John Martin's view) - used as the cover of *Architectural Review* (June 1944) - is now in the Radev Collection. Piper's painting was among a selection from the collection shown at Pallant House, Chichester and Victoria Art Gallery, Bath last year.

The collection (some 800 works) is named after the Bulgarian émigré Mattei Radev, who was left pictures by Eardley Knollys in 1991, who in turn was bequeathed paintings collected by Eddy Sackville-West. The exhibition will be shown at Abbot Hall Gallery, Kendal, 27 Sep - 31 Dec 2013

SUSAN AND BERTIE

A poignant tale of one of William Beckford's descendants is told in Jane Ridley's *Bertie* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2012) a biography of Edward VII.

Lady Susan Pelham-Clinton, daughter of the Duke of Newcastle, was Beckford's great granddaughter. She made a runaway marriage to Lord Adolphus Vane-Tempest, son of Lord Londonderry, who Queen Victoria observed 'drinks and has been shut up for delirium tremens'. Susan's father refused to give consent to the marriage, there was no marriage settlement, and because her father would not allow her to use his carriage, she walked to church with her governess. Within days, Adolphus had gone mad and was locked up.

The Prince of Wales began a relationship with Susan in 1867 and was a frequent visitor to her Westminster house. In 1871, she became pregnant but delayed telling the prince for five or six months. She

was advised to see the prince's doctor. Susan moved to Ramsgate to await the baby's birth. Mystery surrounds the child as no birth is registered under Susan's name. Perhaps the pregnancy was terminated at a late hour, or the child handed over to someone else. Four years later Lady Susan was dead.

Her mother's own disastrous story is told in Virginia Surtees *A Beckford Inheritance* (Wilton: Michael Russell, 1977).

HISTORY OF PARLIAMENT

The Beckford family's involvement with the British Parliament can now be explored on-line through the History of Parliament website. A description and history of constituencies is provided together with a list of members. Biographical entries include those for Alderman Beckford and his sons William and Richard, together with brothers Julines, Richard and nephew Peter.

BECKFORD ALFRESCO

There will be a treat for Beckfordians on Sunday 7 July, which includes a unique opportunity to hear some of William Beckford's own music in a Fonthill setting.

Michael Maxwell Steer, who edited and published Beckford's music ten years ago, is organising a *Beckford Alfresco* day at Ashley Wood Farm, overlooking Fonthill Lake, on the estate once owned by the Beckford family. The day is a fund raising event in aid of the Cherubim Music Trust.

As well as songs from Beckford's *Arcadian Pastoral*, there will be a representative selection of his vocal music performed by young professionals accompanied by the Cherubim String Quartet, directed by Steer himself.

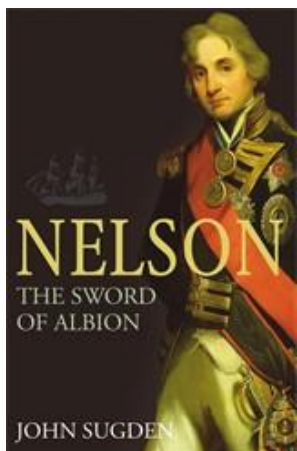
The day will run from 12-6, will include readings in Ashley Wood Barn from Beckford's writings and the performance of a short one-man play by a local author about Nelson's visit. There will also be guided visits to

the grottoes and Fonthill Abbey site (by kind permission of the landowners), and a Beckford colloquium in which informed visitors will be encouraged to present their own perspective of the man and his world. There will be an all-day bar and coffee stand, but visitors are welcome to bring their own picnic.

Details of the day will be available shortly at www.cherubimtrust.org/ Pricing for the separate events has yet to be established, but a ticket for the whole day is likely to be £25 in advance, or £28 on the gate. In the meanwhile, anyone interested in enquiring or booking should contact mms@cherubimtrust.org

Cherubim Music Trust is a charity that loans instruments of professional calibre to talented young music students who have reached the stage in their development where they require one that is beyond their means to reach their potential.

NELSON: THE SWORD OF ALBION



The second and final volume of John Sugden's life of Nelson, *Nelson: The Sword of Albion* (London: Bodley Head, 2012) surveys the last eight years of Nelson's life including the famous victories at the battles of the Nile, Copenhagen and Trafalgar. Andrew Roberts in a *Telegraph* review described the book as 'a carefully nuanced, yet ultimately admiring portrait' of the admiral.

Sugden describes the Beckford/Hamilton peerage scheme (p.381), and gives an account of the Christmas visit by Nelson and the Hamiltons to Fonthill (pp 382-385).

CHILDREN OF THE SUN

'Henry Green's account of Oxford stresses the extravagances of the life. Some undergraduates came up with £3,000 a year to spend ... The aesthetes created a mutual admiration society there ... It was, he implies, a closed society, making much esoteric reference to the Victoriana its members collected (glass paperweights, baskets of eternalised flowers, pyramids of wax fruits) and their favourite authors. One of these was William Beckford (Waugh, for instance, was a Beckford enthusiast), but the work they referred to most constantly ... was Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*.'

From Martin Green, *Children of the Sun: a narrative of 'decadence' in England after 1918*. London: Constable, 1977. p.230

BECKFORD'S TOWER EXHIBITION NEW ACQUISITIONS



Watercolour sketch of Lansdown Road, 1885, recently purchased by Beckford's Tower & Museum

From spoons to sketches, this exhibition highlights the variety of smaller items to have entered the Beckford Tower collection in recent years. Not to be overshadowed by the blockbuster pieces of furniture, these items may be less high profile, but they are no less perfectly formed, and provide yet more information about either Beckford or the Tower that enhance our knowledge and enriches any visit to the museum.

30 March – 26 May
Saturdays, Sundays & Bank
Holiday Mondays.
10.30am-5pm.

NEW WEBSITE



Beckford's Tower and Museum has recently launched its new website www.beckfordstower.org.uk

Previously just simple pages on the Bath Preservation Trust website, the Tower and Museum now has its own dedicated site, which the Beckford Tower Trust will add to and enhance bringing updated information on exhibitions, events and news.

BECKFORD'S DUGDALE

William Beckford's copy of William Dugdale, *The Baronage of England, 1675-1676* (three volumes in two) was sold at Bonham's Knightsbridge on 13 Nov 2012 (lot 60) for £1,125 including premium. In the 1966 Sotheby's sale of the Clements library it fetched £65. Then the catalogue noted that there were four short notes by Beckford on the flyleaves, including one about Fonthill.