



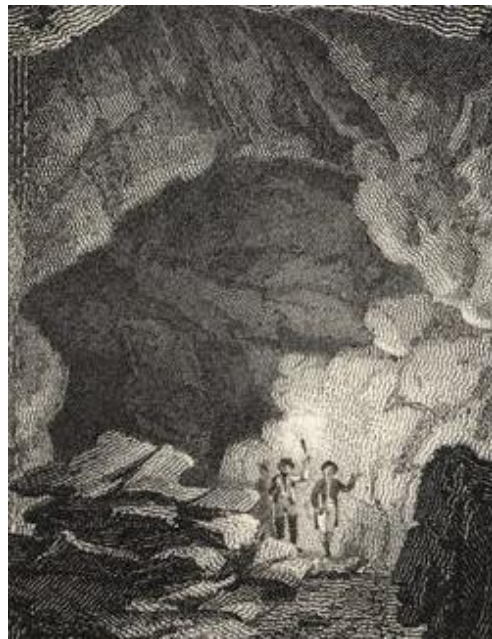
# THE BECKFORD NEWSLETTER



NO 45 SEPTEMBER 2016

**THE BECKFORD LECTURE**  
**PROFESSOR DIDIER GIRARD**

*Beckford's Magick*



**THURSDAY 24 NOVEMBER**  
**AT 6.30 PM**

**THE TRAVELLERS CLUB**  
**106 PALL MALL, LONDON SW1**

**TO BE FOLLOWED BY DINNER**

**DRINKS WILL BE SERVED FROM 6.00 PM**

## **AGM – 11 JUNE 2016**

Some thirty five members attended the AGM held at Dr Johnson's House on Saturday 11 June.

The Treasurer reported that the Society's finances were in good shape, with a surplus of £642 for the year under review. Gift Aid had provided a welcome addition to income.

Stephen Clarke and Mike Fraser were re-elected to the committee.

In the afternoon, we visited the College of Arms the 17th century home of the royal heralds. Given William Beckford's obsession with ancestry and heraldry this was a particularly appropriate visit.

Dr Clive Cheesman, Richmond Herald, explained the history of the building. We were also shown the various grants of arms, of the Beckford family. We are very grateful to Dr Cheesman for that was a fascinating and informative visit.

## **WEBSITE AND E-MAIL COMMUNICATIONS**

The Newsletter is published each March and September, but occasionally items of news or interest arise which cannot be covered in the Newsletter.

Recently, at very short notice, we had the opportunity of visiting Hadlow Tower, but could not circulate information about this visit by post to members due to the high cost of postage. Information about the visit was put on the website, and we attempted to contact those members for whom we have email details.

So do look at the website at regular intervals for any 'last minute' news. Also, please advise the Secretary of your email address if you would like to receive very occasional information about events or other items of Beckfordian interest.

Send your email address to:  
sidney.blackmore@btinternet.com

[www.beckfordsociety.org](http://www.beckfordsociety.org)

**BECKFORD LECTURE 2016  
THURSDAY 24 NOVEMBER**

**PROFESSOR  
DIDIER GIRARD**

*Beckford's Magick*

This year's Beckford Lecture will examine the role that magic plays in Beckford's writings as a theme, but also as a literary technique.

From the books on magic that Beckford owned, his romantic use of magic in writings, and the relationship between science and magic in the late 18th century, what someone has called 'l'Europe des Esprits' based on many scientific forays, discoveries and speculations

In conclusion, Prof Gerard will discuss unexpected influences on contemporary visual artists who share Beckford's passion for hidden and esoteric forms of wisdom.

Didier Girard is a literary editor, translator and essayist. He is Professor of European Literature at the Francois Rabelais University, Tours and general coordinator of the Erasmus Mundis joint doctorate in the humanities at the University of Bergamo. He is author of *William Beckford: Terroriste au Palais de la Raison* (1993) and has edited

many of Beckford's works for the French publisher José Corti.

**ANNUAL GENERAL  
MEETING 2017**

**AT OLD FONTHILL ABBEY**

We are delighted to announce that next year's AGM will be held on Saturday 3 June at Old Fonthill Abbey, by kind invitation of Mr and Mrs Stephen Morant.

Further information will be in the next Newsletter.

**SCOTTISH TOUR**

Sadly, we have had to cancel the Scottish Tour planned for May next year,

We recently learned from National Trust Scotland that Brodick Castle will be closed for the whole of next year. As Brodick, with its marvellous collection of items from Beckford's collection would have been the highlight of our trip, we decided to cancel the tour.

We will plan another tour once the future opening arrangements for Brodick are known.

## **EMMA HAMILTON: SEDUCTION AND CELEBRITY**



Emma Hamilton after a drawing by Frederick Rehberg, 1794.

Emma Hamilton's remarkable and ultimately tragic life is the subject of a major exhibition which opens in November at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

At the height of her fame she was the most famous international celebrity of her time. Her story will be told through over 200 exhibits, including paintings, letters, caricatures, costumes and jewellery.

Quintin Colville has written a book to accompany the exhibition which will be published by Thames & Hudson in November.

**THE NATIONAL MARITIME  
MUSEUM, GREENWICH  
4 NOV 2016 – 17 APRIL 2017**

## **THE BECKFORDS AND ST BARTHOLOMEW'S**

One of our members, Pat Reynolds, recently noticed that members of the Beckford family are listed as subscribers to the building of the eighteenth century wings at St Bartholomew's Hospital, in the City of London.

The 'Honors' boards in the Great Hall record that Alderman Beckford subscribed £100 towards the third wing, and among subscribers to the fourth wing were Julines (£50), Francis (£50), and Richard Beckford (£100).

### ***LECTURES***

#### ***THE BECKFORDS OF FONTHILL*** **PROFESSOR CAROLINE DAKERS**

**TUESDAY 4 OCTOBER**

The Beckfords of Fonthill is the subject of this year's Teulon Porter Memorial Lecture of Shaftesbury and District Historical Society.

**SHAFTESBURY TOWN HALL  
7.30 PM £5**

#### **SHELL HOUSE AND GROTTO DECORATION**

Gerald and Margaret Hull will give a lecture on English Shell House and Grotto Decoration, including references to Fonthill and the work of the Lanes; Mary Delany and other makers of eighteenth century landscapes.

**MONDAY 10 OCTOBER  
7.30 PM £4  
BRLSI, QUEEN SQUARE, BATH.**

## BECKFORD ON LAKE GENEVA

Beckford and his sojourns in Switzerland, get a brief mention in an article by J S Tennant which discusses the Gothic and scientific associations that awaited Byron and the Shelleys on Lake Geneva. It was at Coligny in June 1816 that the storytelling competition took place that led to Mary Shelley writing *Frankenstein*.

‘Up at villa’, *TLS*, June 10, pp. 18-19.

## ELIZABETH BOWEN AT COLOGNY

Beckford and Byron at Coligny were mentioned by the novelist Elizabeth Bowen writing to Charles Ritchie on 23 February 1950.

‘On Tuesday I went for lunch with the British Consul and his wife, who have a very nice villa uphill some way out, formerly occupied by Beckford. Still better, the Byron Diodati is only four minutes walk away along the road... we not only walked all round Diodati but went inside it. Oh how lovely it is. Don’t you think it would be very nice if you and I lived there ...’

*Loves Civil War: Elizabeth Bowen and Charles Ritchie*, ed. by Victoria Glendinning and Judith Robertson. 2009, p.159

## THOMAS JOHNES OF HAFOD AT FONTHILL SPLENDENS

‘At Fonthill we saw many grand things, but great *disparates*. For instance in all the bedrooms were magnificent glasses and the beds & bedding very indifferent, not worth thinking of. We marked a variety of fine things which if bought at our prices will be very fortunate; if not *Je m’en contenterai*. To the honour of the Country the wretched owner is more detested than you can conceive; under his very nose he is spoken of with contempt by his very servants. His Abbey is just finished (though not shown), wherein I hear he exists in Eastern magnificence.’

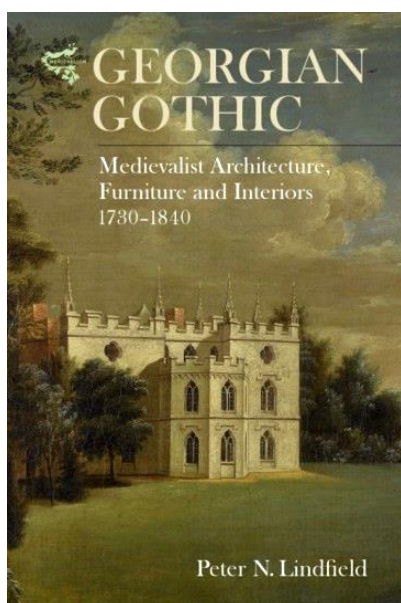
Thomas Johnes to Robert Liston, Aug 19, 1807

Johnes visited the Fonthill Splendens sale during the rebuilding his house Hafod, following a disastrous fire. He managed to purchase ‘a grand heroic figure of Bacchus’, a number of fireplaces and four superb French gilt mirrors which he claimed to be among the finest in Europe.

From *A Land of Pure Delight: Selections from the Letters of Thomas Johnes of Hafod, Cardiganshire*. Ed. by Richard J. Moore-Colyer. Gomer Press, Llandysul, 1992.

## **GEORGIAN GOTHIC**

**PETER N. LINDFIELD**



Peter N. Lindfield's book *Georgian Gothic* is the first full-length study of the impact of the Gothic revival across the arts, from literature and architectural theory to houses, furniture and interiors.

The Gothic Revival is rich, ambitious, occasionally eccentric, but nonetheless visually exciting, is one of Britain's greatest contributions to early modern design history, not least because for the most part it contravened approved taste.

Scholars have tended to treat Georgian Gothic as a homogenous and immature precursor to "high" Victorian Gothic, and centred their discussion around Walpole's Strawberry Hill. This book,

conversely, reveals how the style was imaginatively and repeatedly revised and incorporated into prevailing eighteenth-century fashions.

Peter Lindfield shows how under the control of architects, from Wren to Pugin, Walpole and Cunningham, and furniture designs, especially those of Chippendale, and also Ince and Mayhew, a shared language of Gothic motifs was applied to architecture, furniture and interiors. Georgian Britain was awash with Gothic forms, even if the arbiters of taste criticised it vehemently.

Throughout, the volume reframes the Gothic Revival's expression by connecting it with Georgian understandings of the medieval past, and consequently revises our interpretation of one of the most influential, yet lampooned forms of material culture at the time.

**Published by Boydell Press.**

**October 2016.**

**Hardback. 282 pages. Price £50**

**The publisher is making this book available at a 30% discount (£35/\$69.30 plus postage) to Beckford Society members.**

**Orders may be placed on line at <http://boydellandbrewer.com/georgian-gothic-hb.html> - to activate the discount, please enter BB184.**

## ***WILLIAM BECKFORD: THE ELUSIVE ORIENTALIST***

**LAURENT CHÂTEL**



In November, the Voltaire Foundation publishes Laurent Châtel's *William Beckford: The Elusive Orientalist*.

William Beckford was a fascinating embodiment of the sublime egoist. Because of his extravagance, fabulousness and enigmatic nature, biographers have alternatively presented him as an object of fascination or dismissed him as an insolent and deceptive character.

In this book Laurent Châtel provides an innovative reassessment of Beckford by presenting 'elusiveness' as the defining motif for understanding both the writer and his work.

The book begins by an analysis of Beckford's fascination for the East, which informed several of his multi-layered works such as 'The Long Story', 'Suite des contes arabes' and *Vathek*. By

reconnecting him with the eighteenth-century aesthetic of translation and reappropriation of the Arabian Nights, Châtel shows how Beckford's Orientalism was key to his elusiveness and presents him as a fabulist who supplemented existing tales with touches of wonder and horror. In further chapters Châtel explores his lack of recognition as a man of letters, whether desired or not. Through an analysis of the arguably limited reception of Beckford's works, in France in particular, both during his lifetime and immediately after his death, we see how his deliberate elusiveness of style was constitutive of his identity.

In his ground breaking repositioning of Beckford, Laurent Châtel provides a new framework for further explorations of his work and their rich overlay of intertextual presences.

**OXFORD UNIVERSITY STUDIES IN  
THE ENLIGHTENMENT**

**ISBN 978-0-7294-1188-2.  
272 pages, 8 illustrations. £65**



**BECKFORD BIRTHDAY  
LECTURE**

in aid of building repairs at  
Beckford's Tower

**7 OCTOBER.**

*William Beckford's  
Architectural Imagination*

DALE TOWNSEND AND  
PETER LINDFIELD

This year's Beckford Birthday Lecture will explore the inner workings of the Gothic mind revealing William Beckford's early gothic architectural imagination and how it developed into the extraordinary Fonthill Abbey.

Dale Townsend is Professor of Gothic Literature, Centre for Gothic Studies, Manchester Metropolitan University and Dr Peter Lindfield is Leverhulme Early Career Research Fellow, at the University of Stirling.

**Museum of Bath Architecture,  
Bath, The Vineyards, Bath  
6.30 pm Tickets £10**

Beckford Tower Trust  
01225 460705

Museum of Bath Architecture  
01225 333895

***THE TOWERS OF BATH***  
EXHIBITION

*Continues at Beckford's Tower  
until 30 October*

TRAIL AND DISPLAY

From follies and church spires to chimneys, Bath is full of towers.

*The Towers of Bath* trail explores these soaring structures on a journey from Bath Abbey to Beckford's Tower.

The trail is available in print from Beckford's Tower and Bath Abbey and can be downloaded at [www.beckfordstower.org.uk](http://www.beckfordstower.org.uk)

***FROM BABEL TO PASOLINI:  
TOWERS REAL AND IMAGINARY***

LECTURE BY SIDNEY BLACKMORE

TUESDAY 18 OCTOBER

BECKFORD'S TOWER  
6.00 PM £5

**BECKFORD BOOK GROUP**

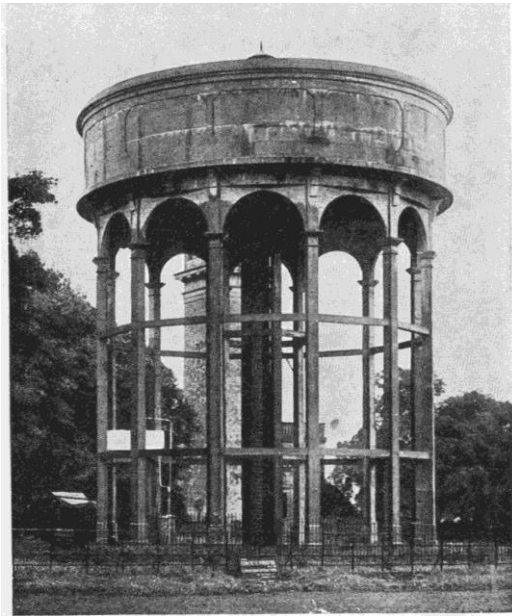
Quarterly book group exploring writings (loosely) relating to the work of William Beckford

*Skeleton Hill* BY PETER LOVESEY

TUESDAY 1 DECEMBER  
BECKFORD'S TOWER  
7.00 PM £5



## LANSDOWN WATER TOWER



Just along the road from Beckford's Tower was Hamilton House, a handsome Italianate building dating for 1851. Sadly it was burnt to the ground in the winter of 1919 because the fire engines sent up from the centre of Bath were unable to cope, as the water main only reached as far as Kingswood School. This drew attention to need for a water supply at the summit of Lansdown Hill.

After much discussion a small parcel of land next to Beckford's Tower was bought, and the 'Lansdown Tank', as it was then called, was built there by a well-known Bath firm, Haywood and Wooster, for an estimated cost of £2249. Until recently it was always thought that what we now

know as the Lansdown water Tower was erected in 1934, and this had helped to establish the approximate date of some of the photographs of Beckford's Tower taken in the first half of the twentieth century.

However, by chance I came across an obscure work, *The Gunite Handbook*, published in 1934, containing a photo of the water tower (with Beckford's Tower behind) together with a report which revealed that the concrete tower leaked and had been treated with Gunite, a special 3:1 mixture of sand and cement sprayed on to the offending areas.

Because this repair suggested that the water tower must have been built well before 1934, I decided to search the files of the *Bath Chronicle*. They disclosed that the tower was officially opened by the Mayor of Bath, Alderman Cedric Chivers, on 16 July 1925, the ceremony being reported at length in the *Chronicle* on the 18<sup>th</sup>, together with a photo of the new tower. The Gunite repair was also noted in the *Chronicle*, on 22 October 1932, when 'According to a report of the Bath Waterworks committee, necessary internal repairs had been carried put at the Lansdown Water Tower at a cost of about £400.'

So, thanks to Gunité, we now know that the water tower was completed and opened nine years earlier than had been thought hitherto.

## **JON MILLINGTON**

### **NEVER ON SUNDAY**

‘Although it was Sunday we were permitted to see Wilton House but a little further on, at Fonthill, Mr Beckford did not allow visitors on the Sabbath,’ So writes Johanna Schopenhauer, mother of the philosopher, in the account of her travels in England between 1802 – 1805.

*A Lady Travels: Journeys in England and Scotland from the Diaries of Johanna Schopenhauer.* Translated and edited by Ruth Michaelis-Jena and Willy Merson. Routledge, 1988. p. 126.

## **IN THE AUCTION ROOM**

### **LADY ANNE HAMILTON’S COLLECTION OF VERSE**

Lady Anne Hamilton’s manuscript book of poetry, collected 1795-1833, with verse by Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Matthew Gregory Lewis, Lord Byron and others, with loosely inserted, a poem ‘Impression recue au premier aspect de l’abbaye de Fonthill’ illustrated

with a watercolour roundel of Fonthill Abbey, was sold at Lyon & Tunbull, Edinburgh on 31 August (lot 197) for £3,400.

Lady Anne (1766-1846), sister of the 10th Duke of Hamilton, supervised Beckford’s daughters. She was nicknamed ‘the Macaw’ by Beckford, on account of her beaky nose.

## **BOOKS**

Beckford’s copy of the first official account of the Bounty expedition, William Blyth, *A Voyage to the South Sea ... in His Majesty’s Ship The Bounty...* 1792, was sold at Sotheby’s, London on 17 November 2015 (lot 83) for £12,500. The account although based on Bligh’s journals was probably ghost-written by Captain James Burney.

Several books, with a Beckford provenance, were included in Sotheby’s sale of the Robert S. Pirie collection, in New York, 2 - 4 December. These included: the Walpole/Beckford copy of the Rev William Beloe’s translation, dedicated to Horace Walpole, of *The Attic Nights of Aulus Gellius*, London, 1795, which sold for \$8,125 (lot 899). Sir Francis

Bacon's *Historie of the Raigne of King Henry the Seventh*. London, 1622, with a presentation inscription on the front free endpaper from the author to Tobias Matthew, Archbishop of York, and extensive pencil notes by Beckford made \$22,500 (lot 41) Beckford's copy of Plato's *Symposia*, Oxford, 1711, in a binding by Roger Payne, made \$2,000 (lot 922).

The Beckford/Rosebery copy of Arthur Simpson's *Secret Memoirs of Madame Catalani*, Bath, 1811 sold at Christie's in New York for \$1,375 on 8 December. The volume was in original red paper-coveted boards with a green morocco and gilt Beckford spine, and a Rosebery armorial bookplate. Madame Angelica Catalani (1780-1849), was an Italian opera singer, who first arrived in England for the 1806-07 seasons. Simpson writes. 'the leading events were collected from our heroine's own mouth, though she is unconscious that they are about to be published'

Christie's Paris sale on 15 December of books from the collection of the tobacco magnet Maurice Burrus (1882 -1959) included Paolo Giovio's *Vitae*

*Duodecim Vicecomitum Mediolani Principum* (Paris, 1549) in a binding by Gomar Estienne for the courtier and bibliophile Tomas Mahieu (lot 84) sold for €133,500.

### THE GARDENS AT FONTHILL HOUSE

Tim Longville describes the new gardens and landscaping at Fonthill House in an article 'The garden of on-going projects', *Country Life*, September 7, 2016 (pp 96-100).

Shortly after inheriting, Lord Margadale commissioned a series of new gardens around the house designed by Tania Compton. One striking feature being William Pye's water fountain. Other projects include the restoration and extension of the woodland garden in the North Wood. With advice from Marie-Louise Agius, oak, ash and sycamore have been removed and more than 1,000 new magnolias introduced.

### SOME TRAVEL BOOKS

A London dealer, Shapero Rare Books, 32 St George Street. W1 has for sale four travel books from Beckford's library.

All have Beckford's pencilled notes, one a copy of Peter Leonard, *Record of a Voyage to the Western Coast of Africa ... and of the Service on that Station for the Suppression of the Slave Trade*. Edinburgh, 1833, has five pages of his notes.

## TWO BECKFORD CABINETS FROM LANSDOWN TOWER

In recent years various pieces of furniture which formed the decorative scheme of Lansdown Tower have been discovered. Now, dealer Paul A Shulter has identified a pair of cabinets from the Scarlet Drawing Room.



Designed by Beckford and Goodridge, and probably made by Edmund English Junior, the cabinets of oak with gilded and ebonized wood were sold as lot 499 at the Lansdown Tower Sale in November 1845. The cabinets were in a Norfolk private collection from early in the twentieth century until sold at auction in November 2014.

One of the cabinets is illustrated in a plate showing a group of Beckford's furniture in *Views of Lansdown Tower* (1844). The cabinet shown in the illustration has internal shelves, but Paul Shulter suggests that the artist Willes Maddox may have used artistic licence when preparing his drawing. When acquired in 2014, the cabinets had internal shelves, but these were clearly 20th century additions and have been removed.

Further information is available from Paul A. Shulter [pashulter@gmail.com](mailto:pashulter@gmail.com) [www.pashulter.org.uk](http://www.pashulter.org.uk)

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