



THE BECKFORD NEWSLETTER

NO. 57 AUGUST 2022



THE BECKFORD LECTURE



TIMOTHY WILCOX

*Twilight and Storm:
William Beckford and John Robert Cozens*

THURSDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2022

AT 6.30 PM

THE TRAVELLERS CLUB
106 PALL MALL, LONDON SW1

Image: J. R. COZENS, *THE SMALL TEMPLE AT PAESTUM*. WHITWORTH ART GALLERY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thirty-five members attended this year's Annual General Meeting held at Shaftesbury's Gold Hill Museum. Stephen Clarke gave a fascinating talk on the rivalry between John Britton and John Rutter. And members had the opportunity to see the 'Fonthill Fever' exhibition which runs until the end of October.

After lunch at the Grosvenor Arms, we went to Wardour New Castle, the great mansion designed by James Paine for the 8th Earl of Arundell, to visit All Saints Chapel, within the castle's western pavilion.

Father John Thorpe, Lord Arundell's agent in Rome, was much involved in the creation of the chapel and commissioned plans from Giacomo Quarenghi, who was later to work for Catherine the Great. Later additions by John Soane included the domed chancel. We were guided around the chapel by Ralph Perry Robinson and were able to see part of the vestment collection, the crypt and, for those brave enough to climb, the view from the roof.

Our afternoon ended with refreshments served in the Temple Dairy. We are grateful to Ralph Perry Robinson for being our guide at All Saints Chapel, and to Min Wood and Brian and Margaret Baird for their generous hospitality.



At the Temple Dairy. Wardour New Castle

Photograph: David Wiltshire

THE BECKFORD SOCIETY
MINUTES OF TWENTY-SIXTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD ON SATURDAY 11 JUNE 2022
AT GOLD HILL MUSEUM, SHAFTESBURY

Ian Kellett, Secretary of Gold Hill Museum, welcomed members to Shaftesbury.

On opening the meeting, Chairman Stephen Clarke said that Shaftesbury had various links with the Beckford family and Fonthill. Alderman Beckford was MP for the Town, 1747 – 1754. The Grosvenor family who purchased part of the Fonthill estate had substantial property holdings in the town, which was also associated with the printer and publisher John Rutter, celebrated by Beckfordians for his *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey*. The Gold Hill Museum was showing Sidney Blackmore's exhibition *Fonthill Fever*, commemorating the 1822 and 1823 Fonthill sales.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Susan Canning, David Foston, Jon and Pat Millington, Dr John Prince, Dr Pat Reynolds, and Dr Kim Sloan.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting, held at Painshill on 24 July 2021 were approved.

3. Chairman's Report

Since our last meeting life has begun to return to normal after the disruption of the Covid pandemic. Members spent a marvellous September afternoon at Powderham where we were made very welcome by Charlie Courtenay, who gave us a fascinating tour of the castle, belvedere and grounds, including views of the landscape from the castle's roof.

In October, forty members and guests heard Dr Godfrey Evans' Beckford Lecture on Alexander 10th Duke of Hamilton and Hamilton Palace. We hope that the lecture will be printed in the Beckford Journal next year.

We were shocked by the sudden death on 31 March of Philip Hewat-Jaboor, a Vice-President of the Society, who had done so much to encourage interest in William Beckford as a collector and patron. The President and Secretary paid tributes and a period of silence was observed in Philip's memory.

The death occurred in October of Jerry Nolan an enthusiastic supporter of the Society, and a regular contributor to the Journal: articles which he re-published in *Beckford of Lansdown: A Homage on the 250th Anniversary of his Birth*.

Jane Holland, who was a niece of Boyd Alexander, who wrote extensively about Beckford, has died. We must also record the deaths of members: Keith Honness who contributed articles on Beckford and Fonthill to the *Oxford Companion to Gardens*, and Professor Donald Thomas, a writer and professor emeritus of Cardiff University.

4. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer in presenting her report said that expenditure for the year was £9249 and income £7321. Postage costs had doubled since last year, and expenses connected with the annual lecture and dinner had risen. The income reserve stood at £8,189.

5. Election of Committee

Stephen Clarke and Mike Fraser having completed three years, were willing to serve again, and were re-elected.

6. Increase in Membership Subscription

We remain a relatively small Society, with a membership which hovers around 200. The Annual subscription had been £20 since 2006. Over the years there had been an increase in expenses; postage costs rise year on year, and we had been warned that the cost of printing the Journal will rise due to an increase in the cost of paper.

The proposal that the annual subscription be increased to £30 from 1 January 2023 was approved.

7. Future Activities

This year's Beckford Lecture would be on 17 November when Timothy Wilcox would talk on 'Twilight and Storm: William Beckford and John Robert Cozens'. Once again, the lecture would be at the Travellers Club, in London, to be followed by dinner. Members were urged to attend the lecture, even if they did not stay for dinner.

We took up the suggestion made at the last meeting for a return visit to Ashridge, but unfortunately the College, although welcoming weddings, is not geared to visits from groups such as ours wishing to see the interior of James Wyatt's building.

We are exploring a possible visit, in late September, to Waddesdon Manor to see objects once in Beckford's collection, including books.

8. Society Publications and Communications

Journal

Since our last meeting, the 2021 issue of the Beckford Journal had been published. We are grateful to Bet McLeod for her work in editing the Journal since 2010, and to individual contributors.

Kim Sloan, our new editor, was unable to be here today, but had reported that good progress had been made on this year's issue.

Website

Mike Fraser reported that in recent months the website had moved over to a new version, with some sections yet to be released. There was the ability to restrict new material to a members' only section. The website had received hundreds of hits each month with some 6-9,000 annually. Work would continue on improvements. Simon Reynolds commented that older members were generally adverse to passwords. Ian Kellett suggested a link between the website and that of Gold Hill Museum.

9. Any Other Business

Amy Frost reported on Beckford Tower's Our Tower project. The stage two submission had been forwarded to the Heritage Lottery Fund in May. If successful, the tower would be closed in 2023. The Beckford Tower Trust was

very grateful to members for their ongoing support of the project and the purchase of the Beckford deathbed portrait. A preliminary exploration of the grotto tunnel had revealed that it was in remarkably good condition.

The Tower Trust had been advised that it would receive a bequest of Beckford material from the estate of Philip Hewat-Jaboor.

The President thanked the committee of their work in keeping the Society going during a difficult period.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Early June 2023. Possibly in London.

A VISIT TO WADDES DON MANOR THURSDAY 29 SEPTEMBER

Guided visit of Waddesdon Manor with Curator Juliet Carey and Assistant Curator Michael Shrive.

Baron Ferdinand Rothschild built Waddesdon to display his outstanding collection of 18th-century French decorative arts, English portraits and Dutch Old Masters. The collection includes objects and books once in William Beckford's collection.

BECKFORD LECTURE 2022

This year's Beckford Lecture 'Twilight and Storm: William Beckford and John Robert Cozens' will be given by Timothy Wilcox.

The lecture, followed by dinner, will be on Thursday 17th November at the Travellers Club, London SW1 at 6.30 pm.

A BOOKING FORM FOR THESE EVENTS IS ENCLOSED

GERLOF JANZEN (1951 – 2022)



We are deeply saddened by the death of our Vice-President Gerlof Janzen on 17 June.

It was through his prompting, following a visit to Beckford's Tower, in May 1993, that the Beckford Society came into being.

Gerlof was present at our first AGM in Bath in 1996 and for a number of years served on our committee. He became Vice-President in 2003.

Gerlof was born in Rotterdam and after medical studies, specialised as a Clinical Psychologist. He was formerly Dean of Education at Erasmus University, Rotterdam and Medical Director of Dijk and Duin, Castricum.

Passionate about English literature, he was a founding member and Chairman of the Dutch Byron Society. From the 1990s, he embarked on a series of translations,

often made as he commuted by train from Amsterdam to Rotterdam, the first being Beckford's *Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents*, published in 1991, which was followed by Beckford's Portuguese and Spanish Journal, 1992. His other translations included Shelley's *The Cenci*, Keats' letters to Fanny Brawn, the letters of Oscar Wilde, Walter Pater's *Imaginary Portraits*, and translations of William Maxwell and Elisabeth de Waal.

The Society's first foreign visit was a Netherlands weekend in November 1998, organised by Gerlof and his partner Ronald de Leeuw, Director General of the Rijksmuseum, where we experienced the warmth of their hospitality, including a visit to the Rijksmuseum.

Our heart-felt sympathy on Gerlof's death goes to Ronald de Leeuw.

A tribute will appear in the next issue of the *The Beckford Journal*.



Gerlof Janzen's Dutch translations of Beckford's *Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents* (1991) and *The Journal in Portugal and Spain* (1992).

LAURA PIRES (1932 – 2022)

The death has occurred of Professor Maria Laura Bettencourt Pires who wrote about William Beckford and Portugal, and was an adviser and contributor to the William Beckford and Portugal exhibition held at the Palace of Queluz, 1987.



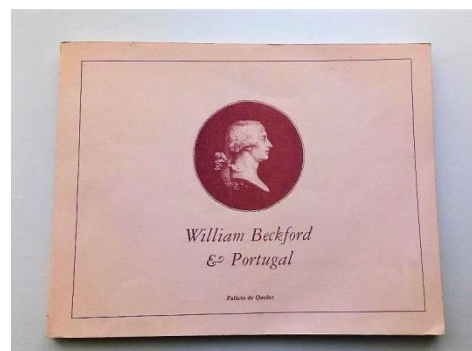
A specialist in English and American studies she was a Fulbright Scholar at Georgetown University and a Gulbenkian Fellow at Brown University. In Portugal, she taught in Lisbon at the Universidade Nova and later at the Universidade Católica.

William Beckford e Portugal, based on her doctoral research, appeared in 1987 (Lisbon: Edições 70). She participated in the Romanticism Congress held in Sintra in 1987, and the Beckford roundtable at the Enlightenment Congress held in Bath and Bristol, 1991. She lectured on Beckford and Portugal at the Bath Festival, 1990.

Her other published works include a history of Portuguese children's literature, Portugal as seen by the British, and Walter Scott and Portuguese Romanticism.

Jon Millington writes:

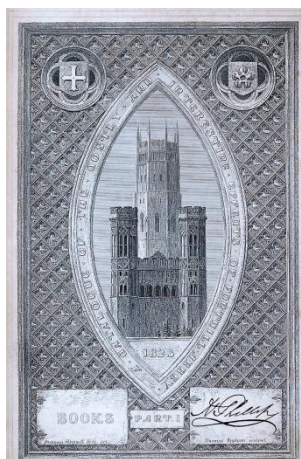
My wife and I met Laura at the time of the 1990 Bath Festival, and she very kindly gave me a copy of *William Beckford e Portugal* which she signed with a personal message. During the Beckford roundtable in Bristol the following year, Laura was one of our guests at a buffet supper at our home, when she invited us to stay in her mother's flat in Lisbon. It was empty for some of the time as her mother preferred to live in London. After Laura subsequently repeated the offer we were tempted, and the result was an exciting week's stay in the Benfica district, with her husband Hugo driving, and Laura and daughter Alexandra, a newly qualified doctor, in the car with us.



William Beckford & Portugal exhibition catalogue, Palace of Queluz, 1987.

FONTHILL FEVER: THE FONTHILL ABBEY SALES OF 1822 AND 1823

‘He is fortunate who finds a vacant chair within twenty miles of Fonthill ... The Beds throughout the county are literally doing double duty – people who come in from a distance during the night must wait to go to bed until others get un in the morning’. The *Times*, 3 September 1822.



Admission ticket. Fonthill Sale 1823

William Beckford's decision to sell his Wiltshire estate meant that the public finally had a chance to visit the extraordinary abbey and see its interiors and treasures. In the summer of 1822 people flocked to the public views of James Christie's ten day sale. Scheduled to start on 17 September, it was postponed twice. Then an announcement was made that Beckford had sold the

abbey and its contents to John Farquhar. The new owner instructed auctioneer Harry Phillips to sell the abbey's contents; so the public had a second chance to view Beckford's creation in a sale which began on 9 September 1823 and lasted for thirty-seven days.

An exhibition at Shaftesbury's Gold Hill Museum commemorates the two hundredth anniversary of the Fonthill sales. On display are sale catalogues and guidebooks, including the rival publications of John Britton and the Shaftesbury printer and publisher John Rutter. There are also examples of pieces of blue and white transfer ware pottery with images of Fonthill.

Fonthill Fever continues daily until 31 October. Gold Hill Museum, Gold Hill, Shaftesbury SP7 8JW. Tel 01747 852157.
goldhillmuseum.org.uk

BECKFORD AFTER FONTHILL

Dr Amy Frost will give Shaftesbury and District Historical Society's Teulon Porter Memorial Lecture 'William Beckford After Fonthill: Building and Collecting in Bath' on Tuesday 27 September at Shaftesbury Town Hall at 7.30 pm.

IN THE AUCTION ROOM

Books with a Beckford provenance were sold by Halls, Shrewsbury, in their auction on 7 July.

Etienne Binet, *Abrégé dec vies des principaux fondateurs des Religions de l'Eglise ...* Anvers, 1634. In a dark green morocco binding. Pencil note on front end paper states that book was from the library of William Beckford and sold in 1882 sale. Sold with Thomas à Kempis, *A Teatise of the Imitation of Christ*, 1726. Sold for £1,100 (lot 1114).

J. Stewarton, *The Belgian Traveller, or, a Tour Through Holland, France and Switzerland, during the years 1804 and 1805*. In four volumes, with pencil notes by Beckford on the fly-leaves of vols. 2, 3 and 4. With the bookplate of Lord Rosebery. (Rosebery sale, 1975, lot 424). Made £150 (lot 1134)

The next lot (1135) Mrs Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady*, 2 volumes, 1808, together with *Essays on the superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland*, 2 volumes, 1811. With Lord Rosebery's bookplate. Sold for £130.

DID WILLIAM BECKFORD HELP TO NAME THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY (GWR)?

Peter Forsaith postulates in the *Great Western Echo*, the quarterly journal of the Great Western Society, that William Beckford may have played a part in the naming of Isambard Kingdom Brunel's railway.

In 1830, Brunel, when engaged on the Clifton Bridge competition, called on Beckford at his house in Bath. Earlier the Bristol iron founder Daniel Wade Acraman had sent Brunel's Egyptian design for the bridge to Beckford, who thought it was a 'truly grand and noble design'.

Brunel probably saw, or even owned a copy of Rutter's *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey* with its impressive engraving of 'The Great Western Hall' and read that the Abbey was approached by the Great Western Avenue.

In Brunel's Journal for 27 August 1835, following a meeting of the Bristol Railway Committee, the letters 'G.W.R.' appear for the first time. Initials which became so familiar over time.

The Great Western Echo. No 237 (Spring 2022) 30-31

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE 1966 BATH FESTIVAL



One of the years in which Yehudi Menuhin was Artistic Director of the Bath Festival was 1966, when there were a number of events connected with William Beckford.

The most memorable was an exhibition devoted to him, and a permanent reminder of that far-off time is the publication, *William Beckford: Some notes on his life in Bath 1822–1844 and a catalogue of the exhibition in the Holburne of Menstrie Museum 14 June to 3 July 1966*, privately printed by the Curwen Press. The first part, by Peter Summers, was enhanced by John Newberry's charming drawings, while in the second, Philippa Bishop provided an invaluable catalogue of the 110 exhibits to be seen on the top floor of the Museum. Inside the back cover was Hugh Crallan's drawing of Beckford's 'walk' from his house in Lansdown Crescent to the Tower, based on a tithe map of 1838. There was also an edition of the catalogue limited to 150 copies in red

boards, with 'William Beckford' and Newberry's drawing of the Tower blocked in gold.

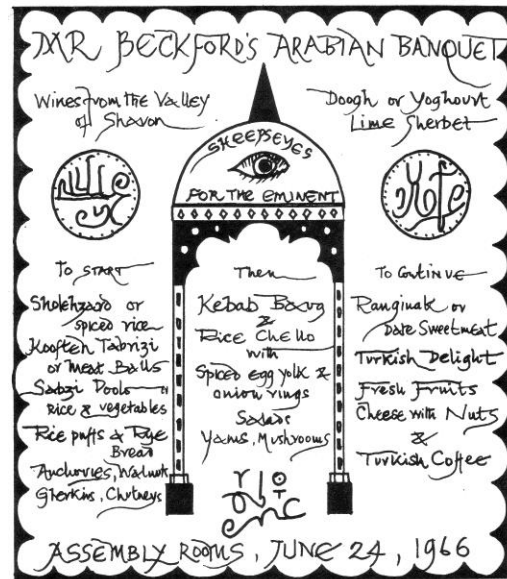
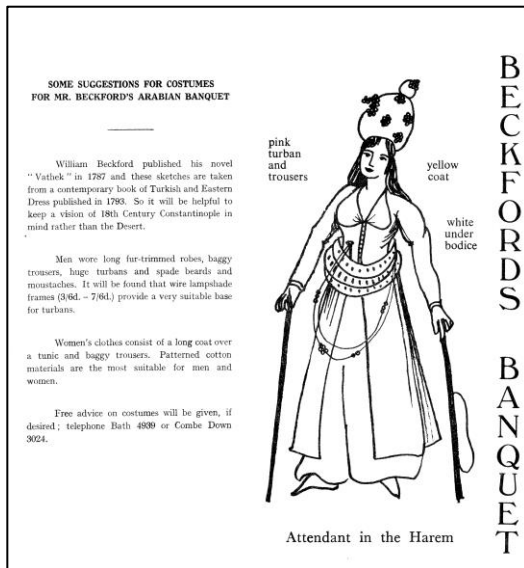
For those who could afford four guineas there was 'Mr. Beckford's Arabian Banquet' at the Assembly Rooms, where 'Guests will be received by The Caliph and the Officers of the Seraglio'.

Suggestions on appropriate costumes such as 'The Mufti' and 'An Odalisque' were provided, while 'Sheeps eyes for the Eminent' featured in the exotic menu of eastern delicacies prepared by the Spa Catering Department (see illustrations on back cover). The Bath Festival programme provided a foretaste of the delights, including 'a fantastic mime based on William Beckford's novel *Vathek*, in which the Caliph, Vathek, entices Nouronihar away from her betrothed, Gulchenrouz.'

Visits to Fonthill Abbey, Beckford's Tower and 20 Lansdown Crescent were offered, as were two lectures in Beckford's Library at 19 Lansdown Crescent. I was unable to hear the first, by James Babb, Emeritus Librarian of Yale, but he kindly sent me a copy of *The Yale University Library Gazette* for October 1966, in which a version of his talk appeared. Boyd Alexander gave the second lecture, and I remember someone standing up at the end holding a photo of Hadlow Tower and pointing out that it was clearly inspired by Fonthill Abbey.

JON MILLINGTON

MR BECKFORD'S ARABIAN BANQUET



Costume suggestions for the Beckford Banquet and Ball. 'It will be found that wire lampshade frames (3/6d – 7/6d) provide a very suitable base for turbans'. And the Menu, which was handwritten and embellished by Barbara Robertson.

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