The Beckford Journal

Volume 14. Spring 2008

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‘Oh what a scene of desolation!’ A Further Insight into the Ruins of Fonthill Abbey.

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The condition of Fonthill Abbey following the collapse of the central Tower on 21 December 1825 is recorded in only a handful of written accounts and illustrated views, the most well known of which is Buckler’s 1825 view of Fonthill Abbey as Ruins [fig.1].[1] This small collection of sources can now be greatly added to through the recent acquisition by Beckford’s Tower and Museum of two views of Fonthill Abbey from 1845.

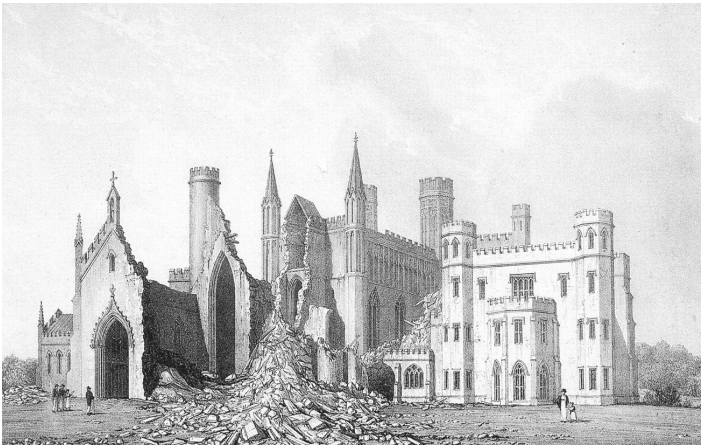

Figure 1

A watercolour by Rev. C. Harbin of the ruins as seen from Bitham Lake [fig.2], and a more detailed pencil sketch by Rev. J. Cardew of the Canterbury Towers of the Eastern Transept [fig.3] are both dated 1 Oct 1845 and were taken from an album of watercolour sketches and pencil drawings, the majority of which

were executed by Harbin.[2] When placed alongside known views and written accounts of the Abbey ruins between 1825 and 1846 these two works provide a vivid picture of the remains of the building before the final demolition that left just the Lancaster Tower, Oratory and Sanctuary [fig.4]. Buckler's view clearly illustrates the extent of the damage to the structure, while also highlighting the substantial amount of the building that was left standing. Soon after the collapse of the tower John Farquhar, to whom Beckford had sold the estate, moved into the east wing of the building, the remains of the Eastern Transept, while the debris from the Tower and Great Western Entrance was cleared.[3] Farquhar then sold the Abbey and its estate to John Bennett of Pythouse, and shortly after died intestate.[4] Owing to disputes over Farquhar's will, the terms of sale were not agreed until 1838, at which time Bennett quickly instructed Phillips to auction Fonthill.[5]

Accounts of the remains of Fonthill exist across two distinct periods, the first of which is during Bennett's ownership in the 1830's. The most vivid description of Fonthill during this time comes from J. C. Loudon who recorded a visit to the Abbey ruins in 1833 for the *Gardener's Magazine*. Paying particular attention to the notable construction method and materials of the building, and the condition of the landscape, Loudon wrote, 'The appearance of the ruins, as they now stand, produces an impression of meanness mixed with grandeur that is impossible to describe'.[6] John Rutter recorded a clear insight into the future of the ruins in 1835, and noted that although the Abbey was uninhabited, Bennett was turning the ruins into a residence and adding new buildings.[7] It was in 1835 that Beckford is also recorded as having visited the ruins of Fonthill.[8]

It is important to note that the visits and accounts in 1835 coincide with the competition for the design of the new Palace of Westminster, a building upon which the influence of Fonthill has long been acknowledged. Accounts of the remains, such as that of

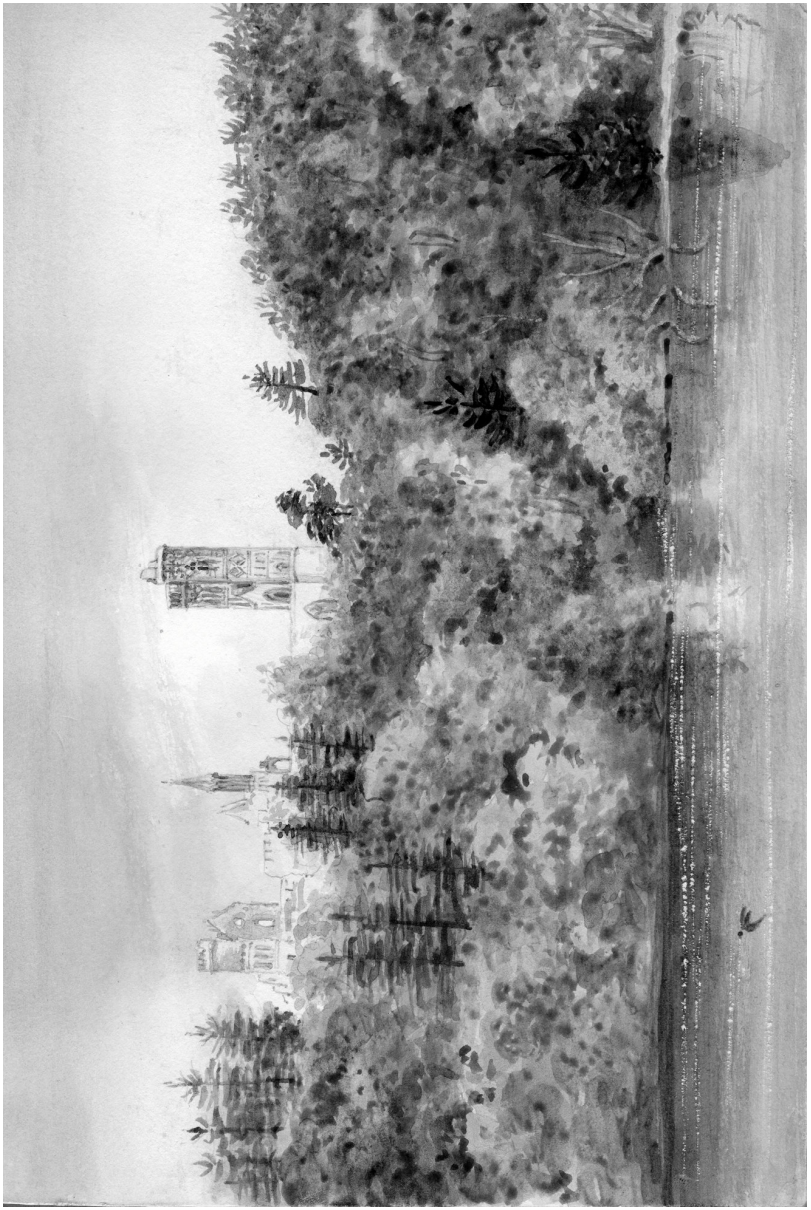

Figure 2. View from Bitham Lake, by Rev. C. Harbin.

Loudon, and more significantly evidence of access to the ruins during the early 1830s, highlight that the influence of Fonthill on various designs entered for the competition could have been drawn not just from the guidebooks and publications illustrating the Abbey, but also from the ruins themselves.[9] Perhaps the strongest influence of Fonthill was upon the designs submitted by Henry Edmund Goodridge, the architect of Lansdown Tower, Bath. Goodridge's entry included a House of Lords styled as a Baronial Hall decorated to show the development of the peerage with arms emblazoned in the ceiling.[10] The influence of Fonthill's King Edward's Gallery and the uncompleted Baronial Hall in the Eastern Transept is clearly evident.

The second period of accounts of the ruins is during the years leading up to the final demolition in 1846. What those visiting Fonthill Abbey would have encountered has previously best been see in two watercolour views executed by Henry Venn Lansdown following his visit to Fonthill over two days in October 1844.[11] These two works, one a sepia watercolour of Fonthill from Bitham Lake, the other a view of the ruin of the Great Western Entrance, can illustrate the detailed account of his visit to Fonthill that Venn Lansdown made.[12] His reaction to the prospect of the Abbey from Bitham Lake is recorded when he wrote

> I followed its circuit and soon had a lovely view of the abbey, standing in solitary stateliness on its wooded hill on the opposite side. The waters were smooth as a mirror, and reflected the ruined building; its lofty towers trembled on the crystal wave, as if they were really rocking and about to share the fate of the giant Tower that was once here reflected. [13]

The sketch of the Eastern Transept in 1845 by Rev. Cardew clearly illustrates the roofless great hall and the windows stripped of glass. Most vividly this sketch details the intricate tracery of the Canterbury Towers of which Beckford had once written, 'Grace, elegance, and just proportions! Enchanting! Marvellous!

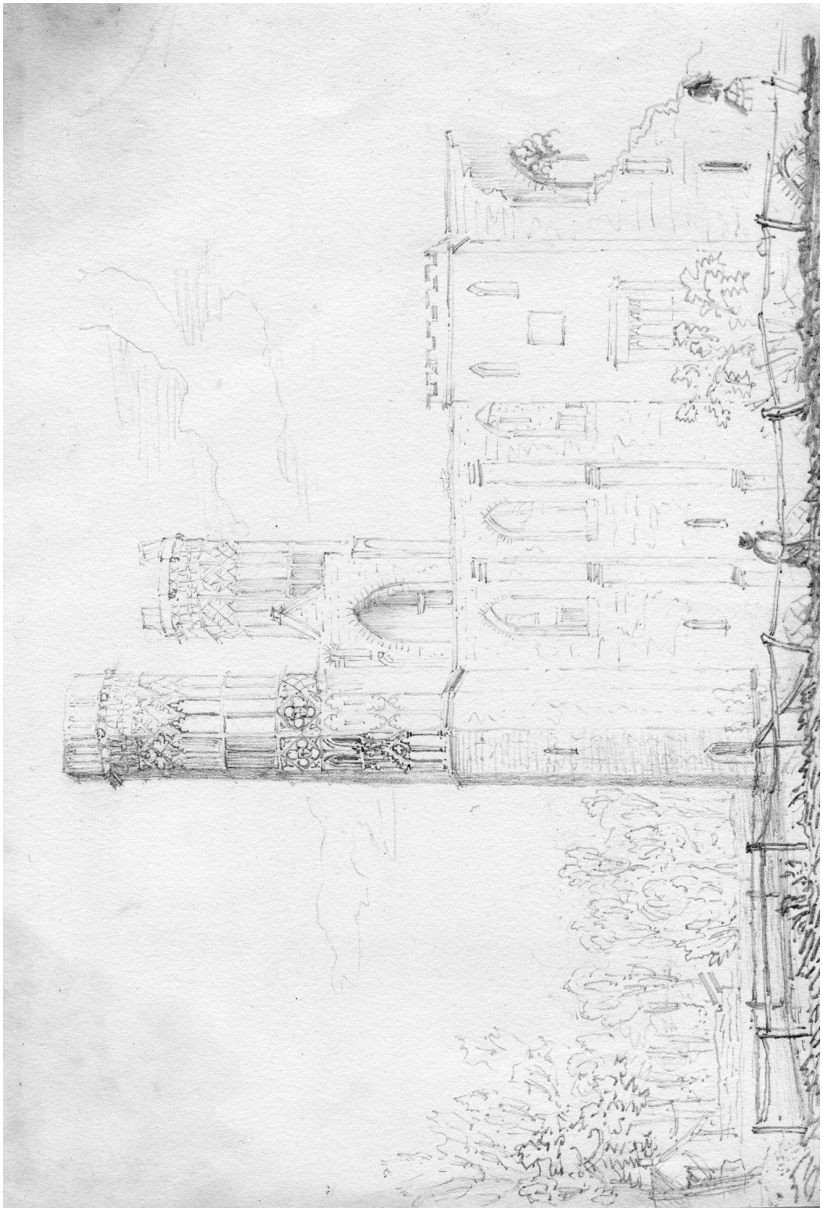

Figure 3. Canterbury Towers, Eastern Transept, by Rev. J. Cardew.

A work like this will bring to his knees, even in mud and ice, anyone who can recognize and feel the triumph of architecture (in this style at least)'.[14] The scene of the Eastern Transept in ruins is best summed up by Venn Lansdown, who wrote in 1844,

> Before you stands the magnificent eastern transept with its two beautiful octagonal towers, still raising 120 feet, but roofless and desolate; the three stately windows, 60 feet high, as open to the sky as Glastonbury Abbey; in the rooms once adorned with choicest painting and rarities trees are growing. Oh what a scene of desolation. [15]

The Great Western Entrance view by Venn Lansdown is signed and dated and was most probably executed in situ. The view from Bitham Lake however was executed on his return to Bath, and his drawing it from memory, or with the aid of sketches done on site, would explain the misplacement of some of the features of the building and the incorrect proportion of the remains of the Eastern Transept. These discrepancies are made further apparent when comparing the Venn Lansdown view with the newly acquired Harbin view made from the same location two years later.

Unlike the Lansdown watercolour view, Harbin's recording of the proportions of the building and the locations of the remaining fragments in relation to each other is far more accurate. What this view clearly shows is the solitary remaining staircase tower of the southwest corner of the Eastern Transept. Buckler's view of 1825 showed both towers at the western end of the Eastern Transept still standing, and it can be suggested that the north west tower and high pinnacle were either removed with the central tower debris in 1825-6, or during the alterations Rutter noted Bennett was undertaking in 1835.

The same year that Harbin and Cardew recorded the Abbey ruins, the estate had been sold by Bennett to Richard Grosvenor, 2nd Marquess of Westminster. On Saturday 2 May 1846 the

Builder reported that 'The public are at present excluded from the Abbey grounds in consequence of the alterations and repairs in progress'.[16] This report suggests that Westminster had initially intended to alter the existing remains of the Abbey for habituation. And it is perhaps at this time that the single-storey wing of rooms at the east of the Lancaster Tower, which remain to the present day, was constructed. A pencil view dated 2 November 1846 shows part of the Abbey under scaffolding, but by this time the intentions of the Marquess had changed from alterations and repair to demolition.[17] A report in the *Builder* from 14 November 1846 records the demolition of the Abbey ruins, and more significantly comments on the new plans for the site, when it notes, 'We hear that it is intended to erect a splendid mansion on the site of the existing remains of Fonthill Abbey, which are now in course of removal'.[18]

The report clearly states that Westminster was planning a new mansion to replace the Abbey on the same site. This would perhaps explain the clearing of the Abbey ruins from the site, which may not have been necessary if another location removed from the old Abbey had been initially intended. The year Westminster purchased the Abbey and its estate was also the year he inherited his title, and he no doubt wished to mark this with the building of a new country seat. If it was indeed his intention to build on the old Abbey site, then at some point between 1846 and 1856 he changed his mind and decided to situate the new mansion to the south east of the Abbey site, leaving only the end fragment of the north range of the original building. The reasoning behind this relocation is clear to see. The new Fonthill Abbey designed by the Scottish architect William Burn, was built ten years after the demolition of the old abbey ruins in the Scots Baronial style. The idea of building a new structure in a Victorian Gothic style, on the site of the most famous private house of the Gothic Revival was perhaps a little too ambitious for the Marquess. A site some 500 metres away, and a style imported

from Scotland, would have been more secure from the unfavourable comparisons that would have been generated between the old and the new.

While the fall of Fonthill in 1825 made it a truly sublime building, it was not the pleasurable melancholy that has always attracted visitors and writers to ruins and which remains one of the strongest reactions of visitors to the Fonthill Abbey today, which struck Henry Venn Lansdown in 1844. Rather it was the recent living memory of what previously stood on that site, the relative newness of Fonthill's ruin, the first signs of decay affecting this once great structure, and perhaps the recent death of its creator that inspired him to write,

> Of all desolate scenes there are none so desolate as those which we now see as ruins, and which were lately the abode of splendour and magnificence. Ruins that have been such for ages, whose tenants have long since been swept away, recall ideas of persons and times far back that we have no sympathy with them at all; but if you wish for a sight of all that is melancholy, all that is desolate, visit a modern ruin.[19]

Figure 4

1 For the accounts of Fonthill as a ruin see Jon Millington, 'Fonthill after Beckford', *Beckford Journal*, 2, (1996), 46-59, and Robert J. Gemmett, *Beckford's Fonthill: The Rise of a Romantic Icon* (Norwich: Michael Russell, 2003).

2 Purchased by the Beckford Tower Trust at Lawrence's Auctioneers, Newton Surmaville, Somerset, Day 2, 9th October 2007, Lot 550. Newton Surmaville, Somerset, has been the home of the Harbin family since 1608. Lot 149 of the same day's sale contained the album from which these two views were removed. It is believed that the album, which was purchased by the National Trust, contains further views of the Fonthill landscape.

3. Farquhar's move is recorded in a letter to the editor of *An Evening Paper* from J.F, the cutting of which is inserted into a copy of Christies Fonthill Sale catalogue 27 September 1822 at Bath Central Library. Jon Millington has noted that 'J. F.' could be Farquhar writing the report himself. See Millington, op. cit., 55.
4. With the exception of Fonthill House and the adjoining land, which had already been made over to his nephew George Mortimer.
5. Phillips, Particulars of the Fonthill Abbey Estate, in the County of Wilts, 30 October 1838.
6. 'Notes on Gardens and Country Seats', *The Gardener's Magazine*, XI, September 1835, 441-49.
7. See Jon Millington, *Souvenirs of Fonthill Abbey*, 1994, Cat. D3, p19.
8. J. B. Nichols, ed., Historical notes of Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire, 1836, p.39.
9. For full descriptions of the Palace of Westminster competition entries as exhibited see Catalogue of the Designs offered for the new Houses of Parliament now exhibiting at the National Gallery, 1836.
10. Ibid, p.32.
11. The visit was recorded by Venn Lansdown and later published in his *Recollections of the Late William Beckford*, 1893.
12. For both views see Jon Millington, 'Henry Venn Lansdown, 1804-1860', *The Beckford Journal*, 11, (2005), 23, 25.
13. Venn Lansdown, op. cit., p.41.
14. Beckford to Franchi, 22 November 1815, in Boyd Alexander (ed.), *Life at Fonthill* (1957), reprinted Nonsuch (2006), p170.
15. Venn Lansdown, op. cit., p 40.
16. *The Builder*, Vol IV, 2 May 1846, 213.
17. For this view see Millington, *Souvenirs,* Cat D4, p. 19.
18. *The Builder*, Vol IV, 14 Novemeber 1846, 551.

Peter Beckford Esquire of Stepleton, Dorset

MICHAEL RANSON

> Never had fox or hare the honour of being chased to death by so accomplished a hunter … never was huntsman's dinner graced by such urbanity and wit … He would bag a fox in Greek, find a hare in Latin, inspect his kennels in Italian, and direct the economy of his stables in exquisite French.
>
> (Sir Egerton Brydges, in *The Retrospective Review*, Vol XIII, part II, 1825).

William Beckford's father, Alderman Beckford, had a brother, Julines, who left Jamaica in 1738, marrying Elizabeth, daughter of Solomon Ashley of Ashby St. Legers, Northants. In 1740 they had a son, Peter. In 1745 Julines bought the estate of Stepleton Iwerne, near Blandford Forum, Dorset, for £12,600. Julines was some years MP for Salisbury, and held various County offices. He appears to have been not only a keen sportsman, but also of an at least mildly scholarly disposition. Both traits were to be inherited by his son.

Peter was sent up to Westminster School in 1747, in the same intake as Edward Gibbon, but he proved a less assiduous student than the great historian, and his education was completed by private tutors at home in Stepleton. He subsequently matriculated at New College, Oxford, but there is no record of his having graduated. However, he undoubtedly acquired a useful knowledge of classics, languages and history, for this shows in his writing on both hunting and travel.

Peter's father died in 1764, when Peter was twenty-five. As the only child, he inherited both the Dorset and Jamaica

properties. Having settled his father's affairs, Peter decided to set off on the grand tour. Writing in later life about travel, and as one who had been no stranger to the dissipations of London life in his younger days, he observed:

> 'Useful as I have been taught to consider travelling, I am surprised to hear it represented as prejudicial to morality. Do you think it more so than a fashionable London life? What vices is a young man likely to contract abroad that he cannot find at home; and I beg leave to ask if he cannot injure his health, and ruin his fortune, as effectually in London, as in any other part of the world?'

Beckford came to particularly love Italy, and he was to return to it for a lengthy period in later life. He was a sensible open-minded and tolerant traveller, and critical of that substantial number of his countrymen abroad, who insisted on believing all other countries inferior to their own, all inns execrable, all servants insubordinate and dishonest, all their religious observances ignorant and superstitious (xenophobic attitudes wonderfully reflected in Tobias Smollett's book *Travels through France and Italy*). Beckford observes:

> '… if a traveller will but leave all his national prejudice behind him, he will receive no small advantage by thus comparing other countries with his own.'

Nevertheless, he clearly sympathised with some of Smollett's views, for he wrote:

> 'Comfort, my good Sir, is unknown in Savoy. What we English call comfort is not understood, I believe, in any other country, nor to be exprest in any other language.'

Peter achieved two key objectives of the cultured tourist. He managed to visit both Rousseau and Voltaire. The latter had

many years before been the guest of 'Bub' Doddington at Eastbury, a few miles from Stepleton. Peter wrote of Voltaire:

> 'He was polite in his manners, but satirical in his reflections, to which ill-health did not a little contribute. His features were ugly in the extreme, but the activity of his mind was expressed in his countenance. No man ever wrote more agreeably - it is much to be lamented that he should have done more harm than good.'

The final sentence is particularly interesting, and reflects Peter's essentially conservative social and political outlook (in matters of religion he was quite progressive). He makes acute observations on the systems of government he meets with in his travels. He is impressed by the Swiss cantons, but criticises the absence of liberty in Italy. He prefaces one of his paragraphs by quoting Pope: ('For forms of Government let fools contest, | That which is best administered is best.') and goes on to deplore Pope's sentiment:

> 'Are all forms of Government then alike, and is no distinction to be made between a Divan and a Senate? I am astonished that an Englishman, born under the most perfect of all possible governments, a limited Monarchy … should have been so little sensible of these blessings … where the rights of the people are maintained by representatives of their own choosing, but where in their own persons they have rather the ideal of power than real influence. The happiest medium between despotism and anarchy.'

One can imagine true radicals like Cobbett and Paine smiling at Beckford's complacency, but to him and so many of his class England *was* the land of freedom, though it went without saying that power should not be too widely shared.

Beckford's letters about the customs of the Italians are well observed, well expressed, and constantly amusing. It is sad that space prevents our enjoying significant extracts here. Like other

travellers he was fascinated by the Italian system of the *cavaliere servente*, and by the wide acceptance of marital infidelity.

> 'Jealousy, I mean in a husband, is become as ridiculous as a worn-out fashion. The good man submits patiently to his fate and makes the following prayer: - "*Signore vi prego che la mia moglie mi sia fidele, e se mai non la fosse vi prego che io non lo sappia; e se mai lo sapessi, che non me n'importi un corno*." (Trans.: "I pray God that my wife may be faithful! If not, that I may not know it. - If I am to know it, that I may not care about it.")'

In the light of his own subsequent experience of marital infidelity, it is more than a little ironic that Beckford should choose to make this quotation, but perhaps his early Italian experiences taught him a certain tolerance in matrimony which would later prove invaluable.

In Rome, inevitably, Beckford sat to Batoni. He chose to be painted in the pose much favoured by English 'milordi', in an Italianate landscsape, with classical bust and urn, holding a manuscript, all indicating the man of taste. But also, like many another English gentleman, with a favourite dog, an allusion to another of the fashionable passions of his class. He took a close interest in the Italian musical scene, and when attending a mass, was particularly impressed to learn that the composer was a fourteen-year old boy, Muzio Clementi. He persuaded the boy's father to allow him to return with him to Stepleton, but only after giving his word - so Beckford tells us - in a personal audience with the Pope, arranged by Cardinal de Bernis, that there would be no attempt made to undermine his Catholic faith. Although there was a Catholic chapel quite close by, at Wardour Castle, the record shows that Clementi was lax about his religious duties. Peter later recalled:

'I asked him, - "why he did not go to Mass" (there was a Catholic Chapel about ten miles distant), and he answered me, - "There was no horse, - " "No horse," I said, "why don't you take the grey horse?" "*O quello, Signore, scappa via*." "Take then the black poney," – "*E quello casca subito.*" So what with the horse that fell and the horse that ran away, I fear that Signor Clementi attended Mass as seldom as you do a Sermon.'

Clementi lived and studied at Stepleton for some nine years. Then from 1777 to 1780 he conducted Italian opera in London. In 1781 he embarked on a European tour. In Vienna he met Haydn, and took part in a musical contest with Mozart arranged by the Emperor Joseph. It is said that he played his Sonata in B flat – and that the opening of the first movement was used by Mozart in the subject of his Zauberflöte overture. (Thus even though William Beckford's claim to have 'composed for Mozart' seems spurious, *someone* with a Beckford connection may be entitled to the claim!)

Thoughts on Hunting

Except by students of William Beckford, Peter Beckford is remembered principally as the author of one of the most celebrated text books ever written on the subject of hunting. He began to write *Thoughts upon Hunting* in March 1779, while convalescing at Bristol Hot Wells after a bad fall. He wrote anonymously, and in the form of a series of letters to a friend, a popular device at the time. He immediately establishes an easy but elegant style:

'You could not have chosen, my friend, a better season than the present, to remind me of sending you my Thoughts on Hunting; for the accident that brought me hither is likely to detain me some time; besides, I have no longer a plea for not obeying your commands.'

First published in 1781, it was an immediate success. Beckford had considered writing in verse, as had William Somerville in his mock epic *The Chase*, published in 1735, a work Peter admired:

'The Chase I sing, hounds, and their various breeds,
And no less various use,…….
……..The Sport of Kings,
Image of War, without its guilt.'

Beckford toyed with the idea of a verse form for his intended work but settled on prose. He sought the advice of William Henley, who had tutored his cousin William.

The letters are written in a very agreeable and elegant style, and reflect a cultivated mind. Every aspect of the hunting of foxes and hares is covered, together with advice on the training and housing of hounds. (The state-of-the-art kennels which Beckford erected at Stepleton can still be seen beside the Blandford-to-Shaftesbury road.)

Reading *Thoughts upon Hunting* it is fascinating to sense the intensity of the love affair which then existed between the gentry and hunting. Not only did they value it as the ultimate sport, short of war, but they also saw it as fundamental to the social and political order. It was almost as if it demonstrated the freedom of the Englishman to enjoy his arcadia unhindered by the despotism under which the less fortunate across the Channel laboured.

And what better way to drive home the point than by an appeal to Somerville:

'In thee alone, fair land of liberty,
Is bred the perfect hound, - in other climes
Their virtue fails, a weak degenerate race.'

Only one review was published at the time of publication, but that was unsurprising. Rather it was significant that a book on hunting should receive a scholarly review at all. The review was

published in the *Monthly Review* for September 1781, and the anonymous reviewer betrayed his prejudice immediately by admitting his surprise that a book on this subject should have real literary merit:

> 'There appears to be so little affinity or correspondence between hunting and literature, upon a general comparison of the professors of each, that a didactic treatise on the art of hunting, was rather an unexpected acquisition; and still more so to find the precepts delivered in an easy agreeable style!
>
> The work before us, however, does not only come from a keen sportsman but from a man of letters; a coincidence the less to be wondered at, if we are justified in conjecturing his profession from some casual hints that have escaped the pen.'

The reviewer goes on to make clear his surmise that the anonymous author is a clergyman, and states that the task could not have been left in better hands. However, whilst fulsome in his praise of the literary merit of the book, he takes Beckford to task on the question of cruelty, thus initiating a debate surprising for its modernity:

> '… we cannot think of dismissing a subject that never until now came so professedly before us, without introducing a word or two concerning humanity and tenderness to the brute creation: although we believe this is a subject of which true sporstsmen never think, or wish to be reminded.'

Whilst we are now very familiar with this issue, it is interesting to find it aired at some length and with some force in 1781. Beckford was no doubt surprised and perplexed by this criticism, not least because he saw as one of his aims encouraging the avoidance of unnecessary cruelty, at least as far as hounds were concerned:

'... amongst the aims of the book, is to lessen the punishments which are often inflicted on an animal so friendly to man …'

But the reviewer was unimpressed, citing the instances in the book in which Peter nevertheless advocates what only a few then but most now would regard as cruel methods to be employed in the training and disciplining of hounds. It is not enough, the reviewer says, to oppose gratuitous cruelty; all cruelty is unacceptable.

He also finds Beckford's sense of respect for the quarry perverse, as for instance in the case where he argues that the hare should not be run down too quickly, as this does not give it the chance to display its ingenuity to the full. The reviewer is critical of the practice of raising and preserving game so that it can be hunted. Infact he is fully at one with the contemporary anti-blood-sports lobby, in finding no room for compromise:

'Air and exercise … may be enjoyed in full extent … in … exercises and sports which do not depend on the wanton abuse and torture of any living being susceptible of pain.'

Beckford was offended by the charges of cruelty. This led him to put his name to the second edition, published in 1783; 'lest the author should be open to a charge of hiding under the cloak of anonymity'. He attempted to absolve himself from what he believed to be unjust charges (as would most sportsmen, then and now) :

'All intentional cruelty he entirely disclaims. His appeal from that accusation lies to those whom he addresses as his judges; not (as the critic may think) because they are equally barbarous with himself, but because sportsmen only are competent to decide.'

Beckford's arguments are convenient and therefore unconvincing, but they would have been supported by most of his

contemporaries. He was living in an age far less fastidious than ours. Yet one cannot help recalling that his cousin William had a horror of cruelty to animals and forbad blood sports on his land. One can surmise that a sensitive Louisa, who seems to have found hunting folk uncongenial, may have clashed with her husband over the matter of cruelty, and would have been encouraged in so doing by William.

Marriage

Most readers will be more or less familiar with the story of Peter Beckford's wife Louisa's infatuation with William Beckford, but one cannot write about the life of Peter without going over some of that ground. I do so in the following paragraphs, but as far as possible in a manner which throws light on the characters of Peter and Louisa.

In 1773 Peter Beckford married Louisa Pitt, daughter of George Pitt of Strathfieldsaye. He had been a diplomat in Italy and Spain, and his daughter may well have found the education and cosmopolitanism of Peter (fifteen years her senior) initially attractive. But in the same year as his marriage, he resigned as MP for Morpeth, and clearly looked forward to spending the greater proportion of his time in the country. This of course meant continuous hunting and the company of hunting people. This was not a life for which Louisa was to develop any relish, in fact it was to lead to growing incompatibility, and on her part at least, growing dislike. Although Peter was cultivated, numbers of the local squirearchy and their wives undoubtedly were not. Louisa clearly began to feel very isolated. In addition, her first daughter died in infancy, and her first son, born in 1776, likewise. A second son, born in 1777, named William Horace, had better fortune.

It is likely that Louisa met Peter's cousin William for the first time in the Autumn of 1779, before his first visit to Italy, when she visited Fonthill with her sister Marcia Pitt. It is by no means

difficult to imagine how attracted Louisa must have been by the young man. Uninterested in, indeed opposed to, field sports, but cultivated and exotic, he will have been an extraordinary contrast to most of her husband's friends. Bored by country life, and out of love with her husband, who appears to have been not at all averse to chasing women as well as foxes, it is not too surprising that an infatuation with William was quick to develop. At this time Louisa was twenty-five, her husband forty. Whilst it may reasonably be surmised that neither at the beginning nor later did William return her devotion in full measure, it is clear that he was greatly taken with Louisa, probably as much for her wayward – indeed deviant imagination (she was prepared not only to accept but to connive at the Courtenay affair) as much as for anything else. The attraction was certainly sufficiently established between them to survive the temporary absence of William on the grand tour in 1780. Rather, on his return in 1781, during the summer months in London, where he could see both Louisa and Kitty frequently, it appears to have intensified. Peter appears to have been for some time unaware. Louisa wrote to William in July 1781:

> 'It is so much our interest to encourage his present security that I would on no account run the risk of destroying it by my impatience.'

In a subsequent letter she wrote that:

> 'He never can come at your letters and nothing but a sight of them could possibly disturb his present tranquillity.'

In August 1781 Peter and Louisa stayed a week at Fonthill Splendens, part of a large house party which included Margaret Gordon, whom William was eventually to marry. Peter then left Louisa there whilst he went for a week's hunting with Mr Drax at Charborough Park. Then followed William's great coming of age

celebrations at Fonthill. Peter did not attend, perhaps indicative of a growing distaste for the Fonthill scene and his young cousin, but Louisa persuaded him to let her do so. She then went to Bath, again without him. Plans now began to be made for the exotic party which was to take place at Fonthill at Christmas time. Louisa was clearly working hard on her husband to continue his tolerant attitude to her absences. She wrote to William:

> 'We cannot attack him at a better time. He is in high spirits, surrounded by hounds, foxes and foxhunters. Every hour of the day do I curse the fetters that bind me to a being so unlike myself and prevent my being continually with the only one I love.'

Louisa succeeded in attending the Christmas gathering at Fonthill, without Peter. 'Kitty' Courtenay was there. This Christmas party, which spread over several days, and immediately inspired *Vathek*, appears to have been in every sense exotic, and may have included ceremonies of simulated black magic. Clearly Louisa enjoyed entering into the spirit of William's exotic pagan fancies. Her subsequent letters contain much imagery drawn from pagan ritual (eg 'William - my lovely infernal! how gloriously you write of iniquities'). In one she even jests that her son William will in due course make a fine sacrifice upon William's altar - a worrying conceit, even in jest. One cannot but feel sympathy for the boy's father! It is also notable that in the portrait William arranged for Reynolds to paint of Louisa, she chose to appear surrounded by the paraphernalia of pagan worship. Her correspondence over the succeeding months of 1782 shows increasing hostility to her husband. She refers to Peter as her 'torment'. She clearly found the times she spent at Stepleton intolerable:

> 'I found my torment at home, going to a Blandford Assembly, to which he dragged me against my will … The house is soon to be filled with a most agreeable mixture of foxhunting squires with

their virtuous worthy dames. The men are too insensible and stupid to be made fools of, and the women have too good an opinion of their own charms to be made jealous, so that I must endure their folly without any hopes of being amused by it.'

Her distaste for Peter's world grew into an intense distaste for him as well. She wrote toWilliam:

'… the more I love you, the more I detest him … Could my wishes avail, death and destruction should be showered on his head, my heavy chains should be broken, and I would fly, wild with joy and new tasted liberty to hide my head in the bosom of my William and conceal a countenance unable to assume the mournful hue of sorrowing widowhood.'

Her infatuation grew to such a scale that she appears to have dreamed of murdering her husband, but it must be borne in mind that she shared William's taste for extravagant hyperbole:

The impression one gains from Louisa's letters written at this time is of a wild and dissipated set of young people, (and in the case of Peter not so young), not averse to irregular amours of varying degrees and complexity, fully reflecting in their behaviour the cynical loucheness so much a part of upper-class eighteenth-century life. Various affairs were in progress, with Louisa's active encouragement. She was at this time trying to engage her friend Sophie Musters in an intrigue with her brother George Pitt. She was also urging Sophie to set her cap at her husband Peter, and joked that she would try a pass at Sophie's husband. She appears to have enjoyed being the confidante of her husband's intended mistresses:

'Your account of Beckford's [ie Peter's] bold and arduous undertaking in endeavouring to supplant Musters in your affections has entertained me so excessively … My Love - suppose I was to attack your spouse and try what I can make of him. I promise you a true account of all our proceedings … Is

> your good man apt to be in love? or must I expect much trouble in attempting to move his flinty heart. That of my spouse is like tinder - the breath of a pretty woman will make it blaze up into a flame. You are perfectly right to keep well with him - tho' I know him to be perfectly honourable - '

The various affairs of this louche set were by now common knowledge. Rumours about the peculiar goings on at the Christmas party at Fonthill were likewise widespread. William's family decided on a two-pronged strategy to rescue William from his various unsavoury entanglements. The first was to persuade him to return to Italy and to stay in Naples with Sir William and Lady Hamilton. The second was to marry him to Margaret Gordon. He visited Stepleton to tell Louisa of his imminent departure for Italy, which took place in May 1782, and also seems to have seen her in London. After that there is no evidence that they met again, although he continued to write to her from Italy. Peter appears to have acted decently - whether or not with warmth. He arranged for Louisa, whose health by this stage was very poor, to visit the South of France with her sister. They stayed there for over a year. When she heard of William's marriage (May, 1783) she wrote him letters of intense grief. However, there seems to have eventually been some acceptance that the affair was over.

When she returned to England and to Stepleton in the Spring of 1785, her health considerably improved, her husband and children were there to receive her. (Peter had occupied his time during her long absence with country life, punctuated by visits to London. In May 1784 he went to the festival celebrating the centenary of the birth of Handel. He later described it as the most impressive and beautiful celebration he had ever attended.) It is to be hoped there was some degree of reconciliation, some return of happiness. However, the scandal remained fresh and Louisa's health frail. Perhaps it was for these reasons that Peter decided to plan to take Louisa on a tour of his beloved Italy.

To Italy again

Beckford returned to Italy with Louisa and their two children, William Horace and his beloved Harriet, in1776 and was to remain there for some years. Initially he took up residence in Turin, which he had loved when there as a young man, and where Louisa had lived as a child, when her father was Minister Plenipotentiary. Subsequently they moved on to Florence. In each case they took on a substantial residence and staff. Like so many Englishmen were to discover in the following century, one could live genteelly in Italy for a fraction of what it cost to do so in England. Peter's observations on life in Florence are full of keenly observed and often amusing detail, and he writes well. Here he writes of Carnival:

> 'Masking formerly began on Saint Antonio's day; it is now permitted the last fortnight of the Carnival only; - it then gave the ladies opportuntities of intrigue, which the jealousy of their husbands prevented all the rest of the year. Italian husbands are no longer jealous ... Wives are mistresses of their own persons; … the black veil they wear when they walk out in the morning alone, conceals them as effectually as a mask; - this, and rooms hired in remote parts of the town, are temptations to intrigue peculiar to Florence. – In short, *amateures* are so plentiful that the *professeures* are starving ... They assume a freedom their inferiors dare not pretend to; for, though jealousy in the Nobility is laughed out of countenance, it is still visible among the Bourgeoisie, where … the wife is always obedient, and sometimes chaste.'

Beckford goes on to observe that as soon as the Carnival was over, the entire habits of the Florentines seemed to change and they immediately became as regular`in their attendance at church as they had been at the theatres!

Like his cousin he had a taste for visiting great historic monasteries, which he did accompanied by his son, William Horace, and his record of such visits has all the power and style of his cousin William's record of his visits to the monasteries of Portugal. The following gives some flavour:

> 'If you have a taste for wild and romantic scenes, and are not easily intimidated by difficulties; if … the season of the year be propitious; stop not short at Vallombrosa, but pursue your journey to the other Convents on the Appenines. The first requisite is a good horse; he should be sure-footed, well shod, … Give him plenty of corn, little hay, and, when travelling, let his water be constantly warmed: for want of that precaution, I had nearly lost a favorite horse at the Alvernia. The water of the Appenines is cold in the extreme; he was taken with a chill, and, I fancy, nothing saved him but the quantity of hot wine and spices I poured down his throat.'

Peter's descriptions are beautifully observed. He attended an initiation of novices at the convent of Alvernia:

> 'I saw four novices take the habit … It is to be wished they may as readily strip themselves of their worldly passions, and as easily put on the armour of grace. Each received a kiss from the Friars, and they were then exhorted … to bid an eternal adieu to the world … The ceremony was really affecting.'

Peter and his son were very kindly received at Alvernia and he in turn speaks very kindly of them, and is largely approving of their life and what he clearly believes to be their genuine commitment to their austere life. He found the lives of the monks and friars endlessly fascinating, he shows no intolerance of Catholicism, even its more extreme manifestations. He was essentially tolerant and highly civilised, and in this regard very much a man of the Enlightenment .

In 1778 the family travelled to Pisa and took up residence there. Subsequently they visited Sienna, Venice and Rome, before returning to Florence early in 1790. Louisa's consumption had apparently enjoyed a certain remission during the early years of their return to Italy, but now she deteriorated rapidly. She died at Florence on 30th April 1791, and was buried at the British cemetery in Leghorn, where her husband set up an affectionate monument.

In the words of Higginson, 'so ended the romance that had begun at Strathfield-Saye eighteen years before, and which had been shattered by the eccentric cousin whose name has lived in literary circles to this day.' It would be only fair to reflect that it was also shattered by the peculiarly self-indulgent character of Louisa, and by the dedication of her husband to the chase, in various forms. However, one feels that throughout the marriage Peter showed a certain decency and humanity not obvious in his wife, but supported by much of the broader picture we can form of him.

Peter remained in Italy with his son and daughter until 1799, when war forced his return to England. The last years of Peter's life appear to have been afflicted by financial difficulties. He had spent freely in his youth. Income from sugar was declining towards the end of the century, because of a succession of destructive hurricanes, the increasing cost of slaves, and the ever higher import duties imposed by the British Government. Also, like his cousin at Fonthill, and other absentee owners, he was vulnerable to dishonest and inefficient managers. In addition to all these eventualities, his son William Horace appears to have appealed to his uncle George, Lord Rivers, who had been fond of Louisa, to bail him out of major financial difficulties by soliciting a £12,000 loan secured on Stepleton, without initially informing his father. William would inherit the title, and (he assumed) the estate, as the second Lord Rivers was unmarried. Rivers proved generous, but he appears to have involved Peter in a joint rescue

operation which was to prove very expensive for him. He had to make settlements in his will which secured the loans Rivers gave his son. However, William does appear to have reformed, at least for a time. Perhaps the letter of sound avuncular advice from Lord Rivers to his nephew had some effect:

> 'You are to take your name out of all Clubs: - To give the most binding Promises never more to play: - You are not to keep Hunters … You must part with your Post-Chaise and travel as becomes your circumstances … I expect you will be careful not to incur Debts with Tradesmen, but to Pay for every thing as you have it. These, and perhaps more Conditions, if I had time to recollect them, and may think proper to add them when I do, - I insist you will adhere to until you are Married … You must not suppose that you are: - as you express yourself, - my Heir, - should I not have Children: -You are only Heir to the Title:-but my Estate is perfectly in my own Power.'

In 1808 William Horace married Frances Rigby of Mistley Hall Essex. In due course he inherited the Stepleton estate, and by special Act of Parliament in 1828 he became third Baron Rivers. However, debts continued to plague the estate, and in 1831 he drowned himself in the Serpentine. His only son, born in 1810, eventually became fourth Baron Rivers, but the male line of the Beckfords was to die with him.

But to return to the main subject of our story. Peter Beckford died on 18th February 1811. On his vault (constructed two years earlier) he had already had the following couplet inscribed:

> 'We die and are forgotten, - 'tis Heaven's decree;
> Thus the fate of others will be the fate of me.'

In fact he was to be proved wrong. He was not to be completely forgotten. His book *Thoughts on Hunting* was to go through many editions, and to remain widely read amongst hunting people, even up to the present time. His memoirs of his

travels in Italy, published in 1808, have sadly never been reprinted, but would merit a new edition. To most who know of him at all, however, he is remembered only as a peripheral figure in the story of his much more famous brother. But he was much more than a hunting squire, and deserves attention in his own right.

Bibliography

This article is largely dependent on the biography by Henry Higginson, published in 1937. All quotations from *Thoughts on Hunting* and *Familiar Letters from Italy* are selected from those which appear in Higginson. Most of the quotations from the letters of Louisa appear in Guy Chapman's *Beckford*, of which substantial use has been made. The following list is by no means comprehensive, but includes some principal sources, the second and third sadly scarce.

Beckford, Peter. *Thoughts upon Hare and Fox Hunting. In a Series of Familiar Letters to a Friend.* Salisbury, 1781. Many subsequent editions.

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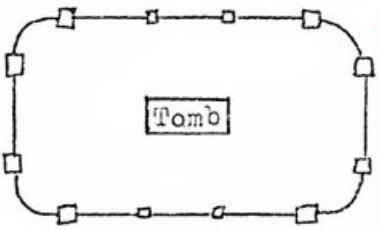
The Railings for Beckford's Tomb

JON MILLINGTON

Most visitors to Beckford's Tower are probably unaware of the fascinating history of the railings along the boundary wall of Lansdown Cemetery. The ones there today appear to be those that formerly enclosed Beckford's tomb at Bath Abbey Cemetery, yet they were actually erected in 2000 to replace the originals which were removed during the last war.

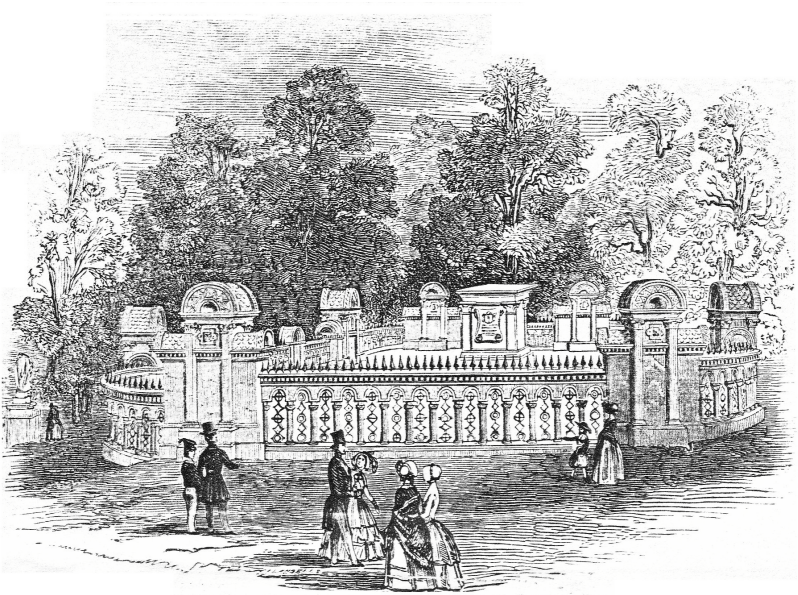
Beckford's Tomb at Bath Abbey Cemetery

At Bath Abbey Cemetery the railings formed a handsome border to his first grave, although they had not been erected at the time of his burial on 18 May 1844. Meyler's *Original Bath Guide* for c.1847, having noticed Beckford's 'magnificent granite Mausoleum', observed 'The tomb has since been surrounded by an exceedingly massive and highly ornamental railing of iron, enclosing a space of ground some twenty yards by twelve.'[1] How accurate these measurements are can be ascertained by measuring the stone pillars at Lansdown and the distances between them. These suggest that the railings enclosed a slightly larger area closer to 21½ yards by 13 (19.6 m by 11.4), as shown in the plan.[2]



Plan of Grave

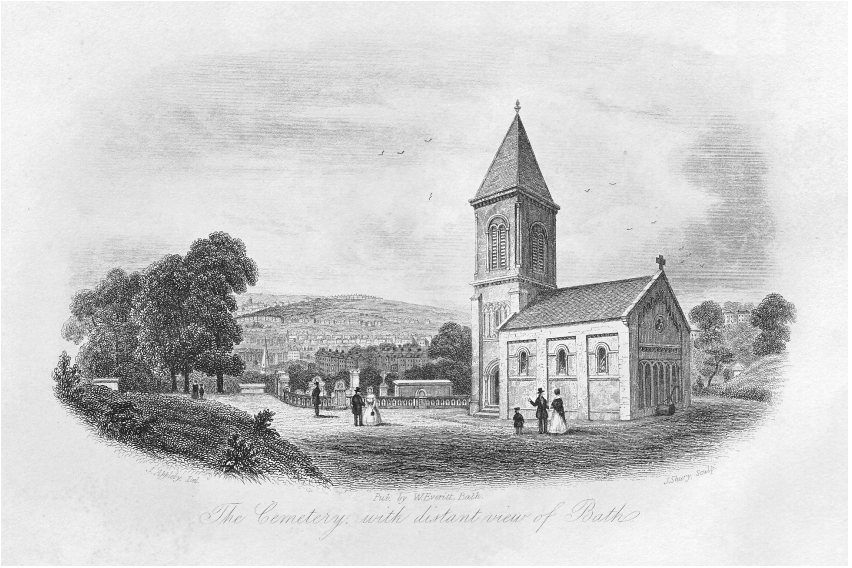
The area at the Abbey Cemetery formerly occupied by his grave is now grassed over and no one is buried there, but we have some idea of how it originally appeared from contemporary engravings and a drawing in the Beckford Papers which also shows the Cemetery chapel and cloisters (never built) round three sides of the grave.[3] From these views, and knowing the area enclosed by the grave, the layout of the railings can be ascertained.



TOMB OF MR. BECKFORD, IN THE CEMETERY AT BATH.

Every length of railing consists of a number of sections, each containing three heraldic motifs arranged vertically, flanked by a column on either side. Two different heraldic motifs, the Hamilton cinquefoil and the Latimer cross, appear successively in the sections, so if one has a cross above a cinquefoil above a cross, the next will have the opposite arrangement. There were three 12-section lengths along each of the two longer sides, 14-

section lengths at either end and an 11-section curved length at each corner. The railings were supported by pillars, eight large ones at the corners and four smaller, lower ones between the 12-section lengths. In the Beckford Papers drawing, probably dating from late 1843 or early 1844, the section lengths are 12, 17 and 12, but a decision must subsequently have been made to reduce the 17 to 12. An end view of the grave from the *Illustrated London News* in 1846, shown above, clearly depicts a 14-section length,[4] while two 12-section lengths are partly visible in Everitt's engraving 'The Cemetery, with distant view of Bath' shown below.[5] It was published c.1849 after the tomb and railings had been moved to Lansdown.



Dr Tunstall was less enthusiastic than Meyler about the overall effect of the grave. In the first edition of his *Rambles about Bath* published in 1847 he wrote, 'The whole space in front of the chapel is occupied by the enclosure of the tomb of Beckford, of Fonthill, with its heavy railing and hewn stone piers. What a pity

it is that he did not himself design it! then, indeed, his grave would have been an ornament; whereas now it seems uselessly to occupy the foreground of the chapel.' Admittedly Tunstall was only referring to the railings, as he went on to say, 'The red granite tomb, which was made under his own directions, is one of the most chaste and beautiful efforts of the sculptor which modern times have produced.'[6]

No doubt others shared Dr Tunstall's opinion of the unduly large grave, but we have to bear in mind that the cemetery had only been consecrated in January 1844, just a few months before Beckford's burial, and so was almost empty.

Removal of Tomb and Railings to Lansdown

Some fifty years after the event Goodridge's son Alfred wrote that the Duchess of Hamilton gave the Tower and grounds to the then Rector of Walcot in 1847 'on the condition that her father's tomb should be removed to the place he chose in his life-time, and the enclosure used in connection with an entrance gateway, which was erected from my father's design for Mr. Widdrington, the then Rector.'[7] She probably realised that the railings would look equally impressive flanking the gateway to the new cemetery at Lansdown.

Another engraving by Everitt, 'Beckford's Tower, Walcot Cemetery, Lansdown, Bath', c.1849,[5] shown below, shows how successfully Goodridge fulfilled her second condition, although he was unable to use two of the four curved railings whose whereabouts are unknown. Two of the larger pillars were not needed to support railings, so Goodridge skilfully placed them at the furthest points on either side of his gateway, making the distance between them and the next large pillar equal to that of a 14-section length of railing. He filled in the gap with a fine ashlar wall of the same height as the top rails of the railings. These walls

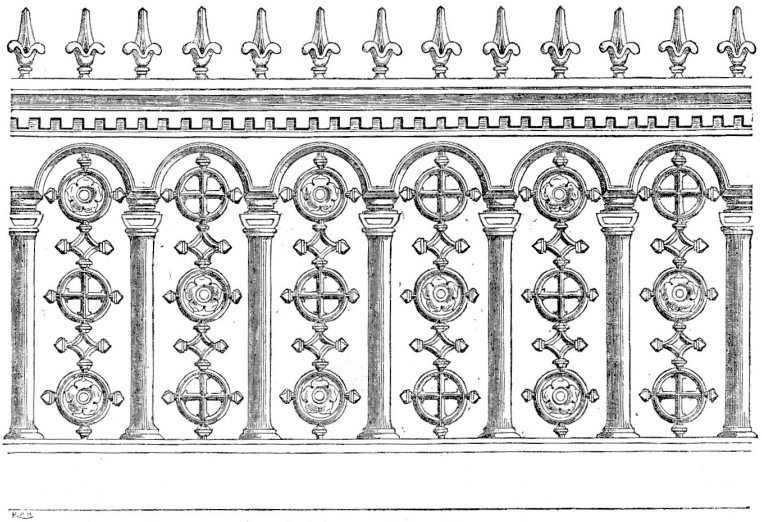
were admirable foils between the formality of the gateway and railings, and the random rubble walls beyond.

The Great Exhibition of 1851

A mystery surrounds at least one additional straight length of railing which was shown at the 1851 Great Exhibition, according to the *Illustrated London News*. Their Exhibition Supplement for 3 May carried an illustration with the caption 'Railing for a Tomb – Coalbrook Dale. By Cole' (see below) with this description on another page: 'The original of this was designed and erected for that [tomb] of the celebrated Beckford, author of "Vathek" at Bath. It is of a simple and elegant character, standing about two and a half feet high. This casting affords one of many gratifying examples of the progress made in this country within the last few years in this important and elegant branch of decorative art.'[8]

Rather puzzlingly this railing is not mentioned in the three-volume catalogue of the Great Exhibition, either under the

Coalbrookdale Company's long entry or elsewhere. Although the *Illustrated London News* gives the impression that the railing was an exhibit, it may have served some purely functional purpose inside or outside the Crystal Palace. Unless the wrong height was given above, the railing must have been a scaled down version of the railings at Lansdown which are nearly half as high again.



RAILING FOR A TOMB.—COALBROOK DALE.—BY COLE.

The reference to Cole in the caption is most interesting. In 1851, the best-known Cole was undoubtedly Henry Cole who, with Prince Albert and Joseph Paxton, was one of the principal architects of the Great Exhibition. So it is fair to assume that, in a Supplement on the Exhibition, a reference to Cole meant Henry Cole, and this view was also taken by Christopher Hobhouse in 1851 and the Great Exhibition.[9]

Ambitious and energetic, Cole was subsequently responsible for building up the collection of applied art that was later to

become the Victoria and Albert Museum. As his autobiography, *Fifty Years of Public Work*, deals rather briefly with his early life, it is not altogether surprising that there is no mention of the railings. In spite of this, they can reasonably be attributed to him because he was well known as an industrial designer by the 1840s and actually worked in this capacity for the Coalbrookdale Company around the period of the Great Exhibition.

However, Beckford may have produced a preliminary sketch himself as the design incorporates cinquefoils and crosses flory.

Both these motifs proclaimed illustrious ancestors on his mother's side. Her father was a member of the ancient family of Hamilton which was represented by the cinquefoil, while through her mother he could trace a direct line back to the first Lord Latimer, whose coat of arms was a gold cross flory on a red field. Soon after work started on the building of Fonthill Abbey in

1796, Beckford began to use these two motifs on the backs of some of his books and elsewhere. It is appropriate that they were finally used on the railings for his tomb.

Wartime Removal of Railings for Scrap Iron

In October 1942 there were several accounts in the *Bath Chronicle* of cast iron railings being removed for scrap to help the war effort, and one report headed 'The railings around the old tombs in Walcot Cemetery and Lansdown Cemetery are to be removed for war scrap' went on to make it clear that this would only happen if they were 'voluntarily relinquished' and would not apply to railings of 'historic interest'.[10]

This was followed a few days later by a report stating that the 'Requisition of unnecessary railings' would begin on 19 Oct.[11] On the day after that, 'the meeting of the Bath Parks and Cemeteries Committee on Monday [were told] that all the railings in all the parks and cemeteries including the gates at the Victoria Park are to be removed'.[12]

This prompted a letter from Ernest Crawford to say that he had read a note on the gate at Lansdown Cemetery concerning the removal of graveside railings, and hoped this would not apply to those that 'top the wall near the entrance… [as these have] some historic interest'.[13] The next day's *Chronicle* bore a more ominous heading, 'Railings will be taken "Without fear or favour" ',[14] and the paper followed this up with a column, 'Beckford's Tomb Railings', which began: 'Much interest had arisen over Ernest Crawford's plea that the railings should not be taken for scrap.'[15] Except for the two quarter-circle sections flanking the gateway they were, sadly, removed. Understandably there was no mention of this in the *Chronicle*, probably because of the demoralising effect the news might have had.

Almost certainly they had gone before the end of 1942, when a correspondent wrote that 'there is still a quantity of iron about, such as bars to basement windows'.[16]

Erection of new railings in 2000

For almost the next century and a half the gaps between the pillars in the boundary wall served as a reminder of the missing railings. Then, to coincide with the reopening of the Tower in 2000 after its three-year restoration, improvements were made to the cemetery, including repairs to the gateway and reinstatement of the railings.

Their replacement required both planning permission and listed building consent from Bath & North East Somerset Council and, in addition, a Faculty from the Consistory Court of the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

Tenders to cast new railings were sent out and, of the two estimates received, the one for just under £25,000 (excluding VAT, if payable) from the Scottish ironfounders, Ballantine Boness Iron Co. was accepted in January 2000.[17] They removed the two curved sections to their works for restoration and, after paint scrapes had shown that their original colour was Brunswick Green, layers of black paint and grime were removed by sandblasting.

This revealed high quality castings with crisp decorative details, and almost invisible joins between the heraldic sections and the rails above and below them. Then the parts were used as patterns for casting the new straight lengths. These were assembled in two halves which were joined together at the works, and on 9 May the railings were lifted into place by crane at Lansdown.[18] One of the 14-section lengths is shown above.

However, instead of four straight lengths of railings on either side of the gateway there are now five, because it was assumed that the well-built ashlar walls at either extremity were merely infills, perhaps because they were the same width as a 14-section length of railing. As was mentioned earlier, these walls served a definite purpose, and their quality can be judged from a shorter span in the same style between the last pillar and the entrance to the car park. Demolishing them and inserting railings has destroyed the integrity of Goodridge's design.

However, even if ten lengths are not as good as eight, they are infinitely better than none, and the approach to Lansdown Cemetery is far more impressive now than it has been for the last half-century.

Notes

1. Original Bath Guide (Bath: Meyler, c.1847). Funeral and tomb at Abbey Cemetery, 86.
2. From my previous article of the same title in *Beckford Tower Trust Newsletter*, Part 2, Spring 1980, 1–3. The present essay is a much enlarged

version of that article in which I calculated the layout of the grave at the Abbey Cemetery.

3. Bodleian Library, MS. Beckford a.2. 'An architect's drawing of Beckford's tomb, with a memorial chapel and colonnade, mid 19th cent. 49 × 65 cm.'
4. 'Tomb of the late Mr. Beckford, at Bath', *Illustrated London News* 9 (29 Aug 1846), 140, with woodcut.
5. Everitt's Views in Bath and Its Vicinity, c.1849.
6. James Tunstall, *Rambles about Bath* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1847), 115–116.
7. A. S. G. [Alfred S. Goodridge], 'Beckford's Tower', *Bath and County Graphic* 6 no. 2 (June 1901): 26. A valuable account by Goodridge's son.
8. 'The Colebroke Dale Company's Railing for a Tomb', *Illustrated London News* 18 (3 May 1851), 374, and woodcut showing six sections with the caption 'Railings for a Tomb, 371. Coalbrook Dale.–By Cole', possibly suggesting that the railings were designed by Sir Henry Cole, 371. The illustration was reproduced in *Crystal Palace and its Contents* (London: W. M. Clark, 1852). Railings for Beckford's tomb, with illus., 277.
9. Christopher Hobhouse, *1851 and the Crystal Palace* (London: John Murray, 1937). 'Another contribution of the Coalbrookedale Company was a cast-iron altar-rail designed by Henry Cole for William Beckford', 95 n. 1.
10. Bath and Wilts Chronicle and Herald, 15 Oct 1942, 3.
11. Ibid. 17 Oct 1942, 5.
12. Ibid. 20 Oct 1942, 5.
13. Ibid. 21 Oct 1942, 3.
14. Ibid. 22 Oct 1942, 2.
15. Ibid. 28 Oct 1942, 4.
16. Ibid. 22 Dec 1942, 3.
17. See files on the Cemetery and railings held by Bath Preservation Trust.
18. Harriet Arkell, 'New railings after 50 years' wait', *Bath Chronicle*, 10 May 2000, 2. 'Yesterday, more than half a century without railings came to an end when new ones were erected.'

The Rise and Fall of the Beckford Name from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century

MIKE C. FRASER, DANAË E. BECKFORD STANTON FRASER AND JOHN W. FOX

> 'The Beckfords are one of those families who rise suddenly from nothing, rapidly attain power and wealth, and produce in successive generations men of great ability culminating in an eccentric near-genius. Then, with equal suddenness they are extinguished like a meteor in outer darkness, leaving no male successor in the main line.'[1]

Alexander's acute analysis of the Beckford family's rise and fall highlights perhaps the most apparent feature of this extended family: its brevity. From apparent obscurity when Peter Beckford emigrated to Jamaica in the middle of the seventeenth century to the disappearance of the Beckford surname at William Beckford's death in the middle of the nineteenth century, the family made and lost among the most significant sums of any commoners in Britain. Indeed, the Beckfords are an exemplar of the age of enlightenment inasmuch as it is hard to imagine in previous centuries the sheer scale of their wealth in Caribbean sugar and slavery accumulating without aristocratic or ecclesiastical intervention. Our particular interest has been to explore the fringes of this rapid rise and fall to clarify the branching origins and descent of the Beckford name for which it might be argued that the three Beckford generations from Col. Peter Beckford (c.1643-1710) (figure 1) to Alderman William Beckford (1709-1770) remain the peak in terms of trading skill. Although our results thus far could not yet be called a 'one-name study' in the genealogical sense, we have deliberately concentrated on the more difficult Beckford relationships to

establish, which typically concern those individuals who did not themselves possess the fortune of these few direct ancestors of William Thomas Beckford. In this article we will describe the current status of our attempts to work both backwards and forwards from these Beckfords to find the source and the destinations of the Beckford name.

Figure 1. Col. Peter Beckford (c.1643-1710), Lieut. Governor & Commander in Chief of Jamaica. This is a John Murphy engraving taken from a painting which Storer (1812) mentions at Fonthill Abbey, and Henry Venn Lansdown (1893) subsequently recalls at Lansdown Crescent.

The direct paternal ancestry of Alderman Beckford was of significant importance to William Thomas Beckford and indeed all the Beckford family, because despite the increasing acceptability of wealthy commoners, establishing relationships between the money of the new world and the hierarchy of the old world remained the best way to secure future prosperity in

Britain. This may be seen in many facets of William Beckford's life, including his efforts to secure a peerage[2] and disinheriting his daughter Margaret for marrying Major-General James Orde who was considered by Beckford to be below her station.[3] A most important facet of the Beckford family's attempts to establish a good family reputation was to ensure that genealogical connections of the Beckford name were of sufficient quality to merit aristocratic matches. Part of this goal was fulfilled in aesthetic activities, such as commissioning retrospective portraits of Jamaican Beckford ancestors from artists such as Benjamin West (figure 2).[4]

Figure 2. Benjamin West's paintings of Peter Beckford (c.1672-1735) and his wife Bathshua née Hering (d.1750)

More importantly, William Beckford seems to have taken a significant interest in genealogy and employed genealogists to discover familial relationships of note.[5] For example, his ancestral charts showing links back to Edward III are laid out in the genealogical tables that form Appendix C of Rutter's Fonthill

book.[6] However, not only are these familial lines not proven accurate, they could only be established through his mother's family or at best through his paternal grandmother Bathshua Hering (figure 2, right), mother of Alderman Beckford and wife of Peter Beckford II (c.1672-1735) (figure 2, left).

Although these had been good marriages for the Jamaican Beckfords, the male surname line was critical to the family's standing in society and as it stemmed from the rough-and-ready colonial source of the family's wealth, there remained societal pressure to establish that the Beckford name itself was honourable. Alexander characterises this pressure in a note about Alderman Beckford's speech when first elected Mayor of London in 1762, in which he stated that his 'family were citizens, and some of them had borne the highest offices in the City for a century past'.[7]

The Alderman's oblique reference here is to his familial relationship with brothers Sir Thomas Beckford (d. 1685) and Richard Beckford (d. 1679), Aldermen of London and important names in the capital around the time of the conquest of Jamaica in 1656 soon after which Col. Peter Beckford is believed to have left for Jamaica. Samuel Pepys refers to this emigration in his diaries on January 5th 1661, where Peter is mentioned in a visit by 'the great Tom Fuller, who came to desire a kindness for a friend of his, who hath a mind to go to Jamaica with these two ships that are going'. A long-held claim that the important Beckfords of London were the brothers of Peter Beckford, father of Col. Peter Beckford, first appears in Burke's *Landed Gentry* as late as 1833 using evidence provided by William Thomas Beckford.[8] This attempt to legitimise a relationship is manifested in William Beckford's 1791 application for the right to bear Alderman Sir Thomas Beckford's arms which were granted in 1685, although with a 'distinction or augmentation', seemingly indicating that direct proof of a relationship was not convincing.[9]

Although there are few available contemporary seventeenth-century sources, we have researched what sources we can find about these relationships to attempt to discover whether this

claimed Beckford relationship stands up to scrutiny at the time of these first emigrations to Jamaica. We decided to look back at records to determine if original sources could confirm this relationship, and if so what the source of the family name had been prior to Peter Beckford's emigration to Jamaica in the 1660s. For example, a connection is sometimes drawn with a Sir William Beckford who purportedly died at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485, or indeed to the original source of the Beckford name, the town of Beckford on the Gloucestershire-Worcestershire border.[10] To this end, we have tried to discover further indications that Col. Peter Beckford was indeed the nephew of Alderman Sir Thomas Beckford. Whilst Col. Peter Beckford was baptised in Clerkenwell in 1643, the birth and death of his father Peter Beckford is obscure, although his mother's name is given as Phillis on the baptism record. If this Peter Beckford were brother to Sir Thomas and Richard, then it is likely he would have been born in Maidenhead because received wisdom is that both Sir Thomas and Richard were born there. This is confirmed in Sir Thomas' 1685 will in which he says 'I doe give and bequeath to the poore of Maidenhead in the County of Berks where I was borne the summe of ten pounds of lawfull money of England',[11] and Richard Beckford also leaves five pounds to the poor of Maidenhead in his will.

Inspecting Sir Thomas Beckford's will further, we also find evidence of his relationship with Peter Beckford: 'I give and bequeath to my cosen Peter Beckford the summe of one hundred pounds of this money … I give and bequeath to my Godsonne Thomas Beckford sonne of the said Peter Beckford the summe of one hundred pounds'.[12] At this time the term 'cosen' (cousin) was applied to a relatively broad class of familial relationships, including the modern usage as well as relationships through marriage, but it is commonly used to indicate a nephew. Written in 1685, this might indicate that the 'cosen' is no other than Col. Peter Beckford, whose son Thomas Beckford was born three years earlier in 1682. In order to verify that no other Peter and Thomas Beckford were possible matches to this statement, we

attempted to track down other possibilities for the identities of Peter and Thomas through wills and contemporary marriage and baptism records. The results are illustrated in the tree included at the end of this article (figure 5). We could find no other Thomas Beckford son of a Peter Beckford directly related to Sir Thomas Beckford. Sir Thomas and Richard seem to have had a sister Elizabeth who married a man called Carter. Richard married twice and had a number of daughters, but only one son called George Beckford of Ealing (baptised in 1659), whose own sons were Richard, Thomas and William. Sir Thomas Beckford had one son called William Beckford of Ashtead (c.1658-1731) who seems to have had no children with his wife Mary Fleetwood. However, finding the baptism records of Sir Thomas, Richard and Elizabeth Beckford in Maidenhead around the 1620s to confirm for certain that a Peter Beckford was a sibling and to determine any brothers of their father who might have a cousin called Peter with a son called Thomas, has not proved possible.

In summary, two possibilities remain. The first possibility is that Sir Thomas Beckford and Peter Beckford, father of Col. Peter, were brothers, meaning Col. Peter Beckford is the 'cosen' referred to in Sir Thomas' will and the claimed relationship in Burke's *Landed Gentry* by William Thomas Beckford is correct. The second possibility is that they were not brothers and Col. Peter (or some other Peter Beckford with a son called Thomas) were first cousins or more distant relations of Sir Thomas.

We are unable to verify for certain which of these explanations is the case, although three more pieces of evidence link these families closely and therefore suggest the former possibility beyond William Beckford's claim that it was the case. Firstly, as Alexander mentions, Alderman Richard Beckford granted lands by deed to Col. Peter Beckford in 1675 and 1676,[13] suggesting close ties. Secondly, Colonel Peter Beckford who died aged 67 as Governor and Commander in Chief in Jamaica was buried in a Beckford family vault in Spanish Town alongside a descendant of the other family branch. Col. Peter's sister Phillis was buried here two years earlier in 1708, as was his son Peter Beckford, and

grandson Peter Beckford (d. 1737), brother of Alderman William Beckford. Tellingly, however, the vault also includes a William Beckford who died in 1708, identified as the son of the previously mentioned George Beckford of Ealing and therefore grandson of Alderman Richard Beckford. It seems highly unlikely that Col. Peter would allow his sister or himself to be buried alongside a very distant relation, so this would seem to support the view that Col. Peter and George Beckford of Ealing were first cousins.[14] Thirdly, some independent recorders suggest that a Robert Beckford, baptised around 1574, had a family in the 1620s in Maidenhead with sons Thomas, Richard and Peter and a daughter Elizabeth. However, we have been unable to find a primary source to verify these claims which would irrefutably confirm the relationship. Although our work continues, the parish registers we have inspected so far from the area have not included this family at all.

The cumulative evidence seems to point to the likelihood that the Jamaican family that earned the vast fortune on which the Beckford Empire was built descended from the origins of the Maidenhead Beckfords. The likely sibling relationship between Peter and the relatively high status Sir Thomas and Alderman Richard indicates that the family was already of sufficient standing that these brothers could achieve such stations in London. A future challenge will be to trace the family further back and connect the Beckfords through the previous century. For example, trying to link to Sir William Beckford who died at Bosworth Field in 1485, will prove a further and even more difficult challenge given the increasingly poor quality of records. This will require that we verify another of Burke's apparently unsubstantiated claims which states that after Bosworth Field, 'the family appears to have been settled near Oxford and afterwards thence removed to Berkshire'.[15]

Having detailed our explorations of the rise of the Beckford name, we move forward four generations to explore the analogous fall of the name into obscurity. There are no direct descendants of the Alderman's only legitimate child William that

retain the Beckford name. William's wife Maria bore him two daughters, Margaret Maria Elizabeth (1785-1818) and Susan Euphemia (1786-1859). The former married Lt. Col. James Orde and the latter married her cousin Alexander, the future 10th Duke of Hamilton. With no male line, William Beckford's heirs therefore lost the Beckford name.

To trace any descent of the Beckford name we therefore need to step back a generation, so here we delve further into the Alderman's descendants, with an eye on their use of the name Beckford. In a previous article, we outlined the genealogy of Beckford's illegitimate half-siblings[16] and described how many of the Alderman's illegitimate children did not sustain families for more than a few generations. For the first generation, Charles Beckford proved difficult to trace, but we can find no evidence of descendants at all. Richard, Susannah and Thomas Beckford had no children; Nathaniel Beckford had one daughter; and John Beckford had one son. Barbara Beckford married the Rev. Dr. Charles Wake and had many children, all called Wake. Finally, Rose Beckford had one illegitimate daughter. For the second generation, Nathaniel Beckford's daughter Susan Hyde Beckford had no children and died a spinster; John Beckford's son Nathaniel Beckford had one daughter. Rose Beckford's illegitimate daughter, Rose Hannah Beckford (1793-1836), married Henry Dunning Harvey (1791-1836), a mariner of Weymouth and had five children.

Thus, by the third generation, the only surviving descendant of the Alderman to retain the Beckford surname was female. Susan Mary Beckford was descended from the Alderman by his son John, and by John's son Nathaniel; however, she too bore no children and died a spinster. This tree is summarised in figure 6 for reference at the end of this article. One would presume that the descent of the Beckford name from the Alderman finished here. However, Rose Hannah Beckford and her husband Henry Dunning Harvey had decided to give all their children the middle name of Beckford. Given that this family was the only route through which the Beckford name was passed down from the

Alderman beyond the death of William Beckford in 1844, it provides an interesting subject of study. Genealogically speaking, it is also an interesting family because the Beckford middle name was passed down in many instances from daughter to daughter, amplifying the propagation of the name beyond normal surname descent.

This line of descent of the Beckford name begins with Rose Beckford (d. 1801). Rose was perhaps the last of this family to make a significant fortune through Jamaican plantations, and therefore represents the swan song of the Beckfords as merchants and planters in the face of dropping sugar prices and abolitionism towards the end of the 18th century. While not wealthy on the same scale as the Alderman's fortune, Rose was considered rich by the standards of the day. He was left £5000 by his father Alderman Beckford on his death in 1770, by which time he was already living in Jamaica in the Parish of St. Catherine's, and presumably this inheritance was the basis on which he built his wealth. By the time his sister Susannah died in 1789, she left him only £100 on the understanding that 'as he is rich he will receive that as my reason for leaving him so small a sum'. The wealth amassed by Rose can be judged by his ownership of a town house at New Broad Street in London, now adjacent to Liverpool Street station as well as a Hertfordshire estate at Offley Holes near Hitchin.

It is not possible to explore his Offley Holes house in detail because it burned down around the end of the First World War. At the time of the fire it was being used as a prison for 59 German soldiers, which gives some idea of the scale of the property. According to local newspaper reports, the local Hitchin fire brigade could not save the house because it was a cold winter's night and all the possible sources of water that might be used to put the fire out were frozen solid.

The images in figure 3 below of this estate house and the manor farm were taken in 1870. This farm still exists and was sold as recently as 2006 for £2.9m, demonstrating that this remains a desirable place to live.

Figure 3. Offley Holes Manor House (left) and Farm (right) in 1870

The Curling family who acquired the estate on Rose Beckford's death over a century earlier still owned the manor and farm at the time of the fire. In our previous article we outlined the sequence of events by which Robert Curling came into possession of Offley Holes. Curling had received the property as part of a problem with the inheritance of Rose Beckford's estate. This problem came from the wording in Rose's will in which his sister Susannah, brother Thomas and mother Hannah Maxwell were named as beneficiaries. However, the specific wording did not allow for the bulk of the inheritance to transfer to the others on the death of any of the beneficiaries meaning that the sole living beneficiary in 1801, Rose's brother Thomas Beckford (1752-1824) could not inherit the majority of the estate. Rose Beckford's only daughter, Rose Hannah Beckford was illegitimate and only around six years old at the time of her father's death so was also not in a position to inherit (nor to lobby for the inheritance).

A public inquisition was ordered and took place at the Red Lion in Barnet and heard from all the various claimants to the estate that were present. It was decided that Robert Curling should be reimbursed with the property against the mortgage he had provided on it, and the remaining estate escheated to the crown, with *The Times* advertising that 'administration of this estate having been granted to … nominees of His Majesty, all

persons standing indebted to the said Estate are hereby desired to forthwith pay their respective accounts to the said Administrators at their counting house; and all persons having any accounts against the said Estate which have not yet been sent in are requested to forthwith deliver the same that they may be investigated.'[17] Rose Hannah Beckford was rendered destitute and only ended up with any kind of inheritance through the subsequent generosity of Robert Curling who found out about her and decided to give an income and upbringing in London to the unfortunate daughter of his debtor. This inheritance was placed as money in trust which it seems was also remembered by Rose Hannah Beckford's descendents in stories, with the effect of Chinese whispers eventually confusing it with money left by Alderman Beckford, and even confusing the familial relationship to the Alderman with descent from his famous son. Rose Hannah Beckford married Henry Dunning Harvey in 1813 in Lambeth, South London. The witnesses at their marriage were Harry and Anne Cox (née Trumplet). Harry Cox was Henry Dunning Harvey's cousin, who owned a wood merchants yard in Pedlar's Acre, Lambeth.

This family link offers a good explanation of how Henry Dunning Harvey came to Lambeth from Weymouth and met and married Rose Hannah. They settled on their return to Weymouth and later moved to Southampton, having five children over the following two decades before both dying in the same year in 1836. Four of these children were given the middle name Beckford and survived to adulthood. The eldest of these was Captain Henry Beckford Harvey (1818-1870), mariner and merchant who was renowned on the South Coast for his heroic death at the foundering of the paddlewheel steamer *Normandy*. In 1870, the *Normandy* collided with the *SS Mary* in the English Channel about 20 miles from the Isle of Wight in heavy fog. According to newspaper reports at the time, Captain Beckford Harvey was last seen on the bridge giving orders that the engines keep the head of the boat seawards to give evacuees as much time as possible to escape as she was sinking from the stern. Captain

Harvey had married Eliza Blake and together they had seven children, passing on Beckford as a middle name. Three more sisters married and also passed on the middle name Beckford: Rosanna Beckford Harvey (1826-1892) married Benjamin Ransom and had thirteen children; Lavinia Beckford Harvey (1832-1917) married George Molland and had eight children; and Fanny Beckford Dunning Harvey (1835-1914) married Henry Forbes and had two children. See the end of this article in figure 7 for a summary of this family.

Figure 4. Lavinia Beckford Molland née Harvey (1832-1917) photographed in Southampton c. 1870

Although some of these children died young, the sheer scale of these families meant that by the end of the 19th century, there were well over seventy people in or from the Southampton area who had the middle name Beckford. We will not trace further generations down these lines in more detail because it would take us close to mentioning living people. Suffice to say that this large family network means more than one line still uses the middle name Beckford to this day.

One interesting effect of the changing word-of-mouth story about the Beckford kinship was that at various points, members

of the family spent significant amounts of time trying to investigate and reclaim the Beckford money which had not been inherited by the family, although the fact that this was Rose Beckford's money rather than Alderman Beckford's seems to have been lost. Having pieced together the true version of events, it seems as though the escheat procedures were to all intents and purposes correctly followed and that in fact the family benefited more than could have been hoped for through Robert Curling's generosity. One story suggests that Lavinia Beckford Molland née Harvey (figure 4) would collect funds from an unknown source, presumably a solicitor, so some of the Curling trust might have remained beyond Rose Hannah Beckford's lifetime. There were also family stories relating to Beckfordian objects, for example a painting of Alderman Beckford, although we can find no written or visual evidence of these. A story about a cameo depicting Susan Euphemia suggests that the Chinese whispers might have caused the family to purchase objects relating to the younger William Beckford mistaking him as the ancestral Beckford connection.

How do these two extremes of our research, the obscure seventeenth century origins and the obscure nineteenth century destinations of the Beckford name merge? William Beckford lies at the centre of aesthetic, cultural, political and mercantile events of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As such there is substantially more contemporary and subsequent information than can possibly be summarised individually and of course it is an important project to digest and interpret these materials at length. Our goal has been to demonstrate that many interesting challenges in researching the Beckford story are at first glance tangential to both the Georgian period and to important existing collections of Beckford material.

Clearly the sparse records and snippets of evidence we are looking for are obscure and difficult to find, juxtapose and interpret accurately, which is in part the fun that lies at the heart of the challenge of researching the Beckfords at the fringes of their wealth. However, we hope to have also shown that many of

the mundanities of life that lie far back or far forward in time from Beckford actually provide a significant context to the motivations and legacy of William Beckford himself.

It is often said that Beckford was obsessed by his place in history, and in this respect we suggest that the apparent sudden rise of the Beckfords to fame and wealth in Jamaica may well be itself an artefact of choice. It has been described how Beckford attempted to legitimise the early obscure family connections, for example through formalising the right to bear the arms of the Maidenhead branch of the family that had been claimed by previous generations. Nonetheless, by characterising the success of the family in Jamaica as meteoric, for example through the style of the commissioned Benjamin West portraits, Beckford himself may have contributed to the notion that the family 'came from nowhere'. A good reason to create such an impression might be to accentuate the height of the position that he was then in.

Equally, it is interesting to trace the descent of the Beckford name, so critical was it to Beckford that his would continue. Alexander's characterisation of William Beckford's death that we quoted at the start of the article as leaving the Beckfords "extinguished … no male successor in the main line" is a result of conflating the inheritance of the name with the inheritance of wealth, and this may have gone some way to precluding the history of the family and its name as a legitimate subject of Beckfordian study. In contrast, we suggest that the story of the Beckfords represents a significant proportion of the context in which William Beckford encountered the societal constraints that he battled so hard against. Notably, it is important to notice how finances are so intrinsically intertwined into both the rise to fame and the descent to obscurity of the Beckford family. Perhaps this article demonstrates more than anything that it is much harder for a family to shed its name than it is to lose its fortune.

As always, our research is necessarily incomplete and ongoing, so we would appreciate any contributions or corrections by email to *mike@mikefraser.com*.

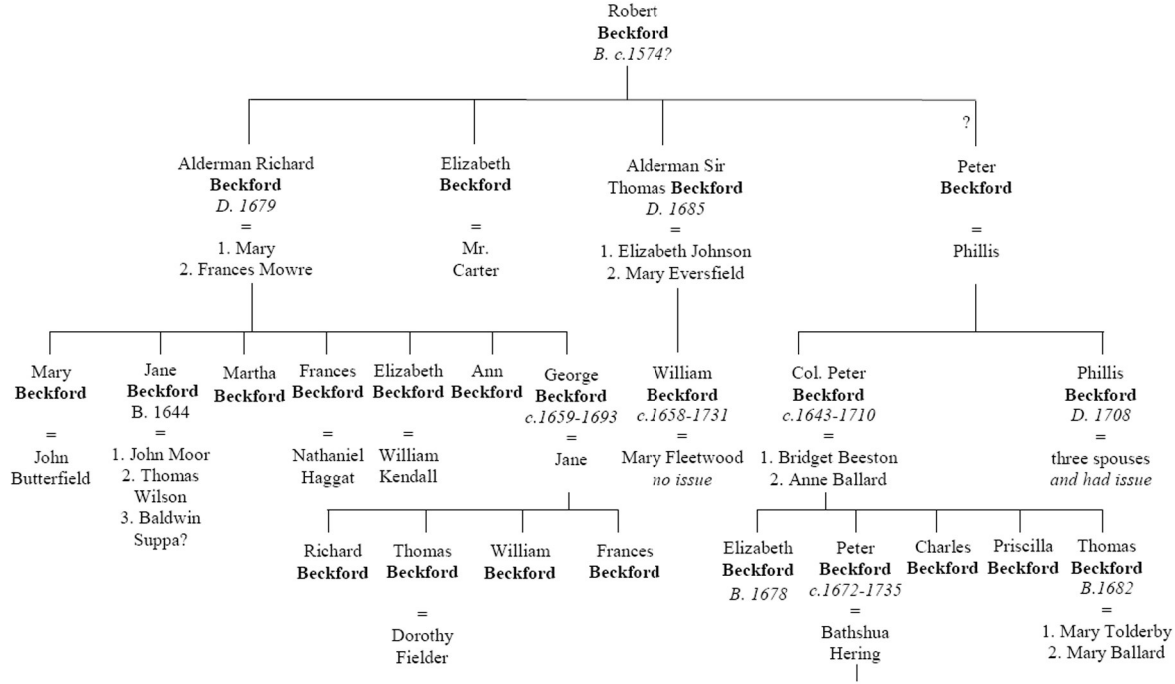


Figure 5. The male lines of the Maidenhead Beckfords showing possible relationship to Col. Peter Beckford with Beckford name highlighted, up to Peter Beckford, father of Alderman William Beckford (link to figure 6)

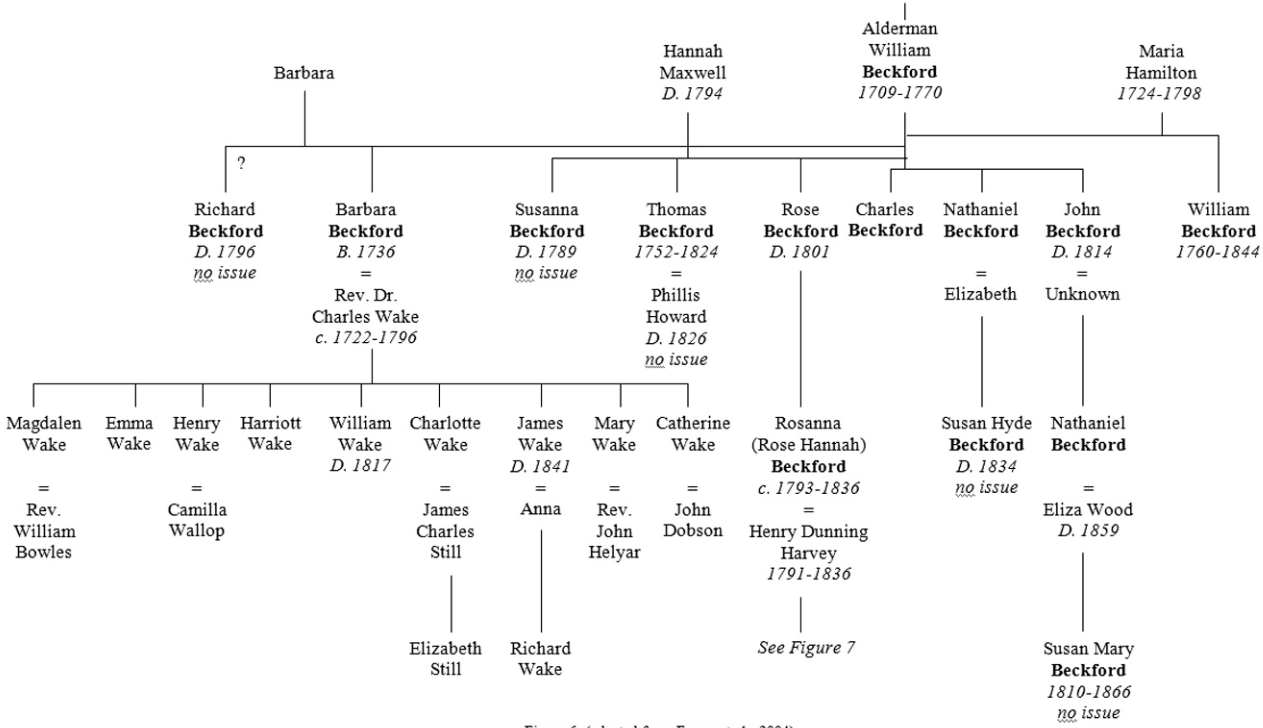


Figure 6. (adapted from Fraser et al., 2004)
Alderman William Beckford's children and their mothers, along with his illegitimate childrens' descendants for two further generations where known, with Beckford name highlighted (link to Figure 5 without showing the Alderman's siblings).

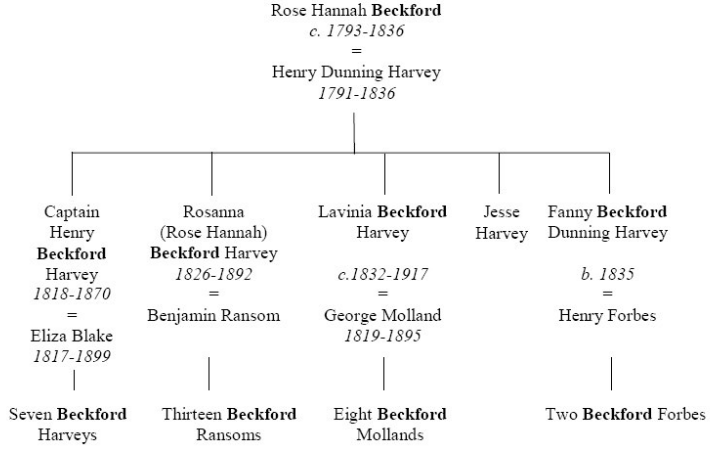


Figure 7. Rose Hannah Beckford and Henry Dunning Harvey's children, and their spouses, with Beckford middle name highlighted

Notes

1. Boyd Alexander, England's Wealthiest Son: A Study of William Beckford (Centaur Press, 1962).
2. Lewis Melville, The Life and Letters of William Beckford (Heinemann, 1910), 229.
3. Jane Austen's Letters, 28 May 1811.
4. Martha Hamilton-Phillips, 'Benjamin West and William Beckford: Some Projects for Fonthill', *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, Vol. 15 (1980), 157-174.
5. Melville, op. cit., 278-282.
6. John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey* (London: 1823), appendix C.
7. Alexander, op. cit., notes on ch.1, p.271, referencing the *Public Advertiser*, 30 September 1762.
8. Melville, op. cit., 279.
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10. Cyrus Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford of Fonthill* (London: Charles J. Skeet, 1859), chapter 1.
11. Will of Sir Thomas Beckford, 1685, Prerogative Court of Canterbury, National Archives Reference PROB 11/381.
12. Ibid.
13. Alexander, op. cit, 30.
14. 'Monumental Inscriptions of Jamaica', *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jan-Jun 1864, vol. 16 new series, 184.
15. Sir Bernard Burke, A Dictionary of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, fourth edition (1862), 80.
16. Mike C. Fraser, Danaë E. Beckford Stanton and John W. Fox, 'William Beckford's Paternal Half-Siblings and their Descendants', *Beckford Journal*, 10 (2004), 14-29.
17. *The Times*, Tuesday, 8 November 1803.

Three Journeys into the Islamic Orient

JERRY NOLAN

Foreword

Antoine Galland's *Arabian Nights Entertainments*, which were first published in French from 1704 to 1717 and almost simultaneously translated into English, caught the popular imagination in Europe, and readers looked to the East.[1] Writers responded to the new market by planning to represent the Islamic Orient.[2]

Some travelled there and learned the language. Galland, who had spent some time in Istanbul, was involved in the compilation of a work with Barthélemy d'Herbelot entitled *Bibliotheque Orientale, Ou Dictionnaire Universel Contenant Généralement Tout Ce Qui Regarde La Connoissance Des Peuples De L'orient*, published in Paris in 1697; while Professor d'Herbelot never travelled to the Orient and settled for mining the riches of the bibliographical work *Kashf al-Zunün* and other MSS in Paris's Royal Library.

Aaron Hill, son of a Wiltshire country gentleman and old boy of Westminster School, published in London in 1709 *A Full and Just Account of the Present State of the Ottoman Empire in All Its Branches: With the Government, and Policy, Religion, Customs, and Ways of Living of the Turks, in General* which contained many conjectural accounts of life in Constantinople, including an imagined account of life in a harem.

In 1731 John Gagnier translated into English from the French *La Vie de Mahomet* by Henri Comte de Boulainvilliers, a scholarly historian and philosopher who probably knew no Arabic but who had a strong interest in the study of comparative religions and praised the Prophet as a great orator and statesman.[3]

In 1734 there appeared George Sale's *Koran, commonly called the Alcoran of Mohammed, tr. into English immediately from the original Arabic; with explanatory notes, taken from the most approved commentators. To which is prefixed a preliminary* discourse.[4] Collections of travellers' tales and letters were published, the most famous example being the Turkish Embassy letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, one of the first women travellers in the Ottoman Empire, who adopted Turkish dress to express her freedom from the constraints of western marriage and government.[5] A collection of fictional letters proved to be one of the most eagerly read and imitated books throughout the eighteenth century: *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy* by Giovanni Paolo Marana, first published in an English translation in 1707.[6]

An important crossroads in the tradition of Europeans looking East was reached with the foundation of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, headed by the Sanskrit scholar and Supreme Court Judge, Sir William Jones, whose first priority was the scholarly translation of the major works of oriental literature.[7]

In spite of the efforts of genuine researchers, the unquenchable popularity of Galland's *Arabian Nights Entertainments* continued to spawn Oriental Tales which included exotic settings, supernatural events and a thrilling extravagance of emotion, often bordering on pleasurable terror: all of which became for readers an easy escape from the social and political realities of their own society and an opportunity to indulge in exotic views of the nature of customs and government in the East during a period of extensive colonization of the East, which was being directed by the expansionist interests of state and church and becoming popular on the back of the burgeoning trade in spices, silks, jewels and other rare oriental goods.[8]

Beckford's *Vathek*

> The great prophet, Mahomet, whose vicars the caliphs are, beheld with indignation from his abode in the seventh heaven ,

> the irreligious conduct of such a viceregent. 'Let us leave him to himself,' said he to the Genii, who are always ready to receive his commands: 'let us see to what lengths his folly and impiety will carry him: if he run into excess, we shall know how to chastise him. Assist him then to complete the tower, which in imitation of Nimrod, he hath begun … he will not divine the fate that awaits him. (*Vathek*)

Beckford had begun searching the Orient by the time he met the Rev. Samuel Henley at the Fonthill Splendens Christmas party of 1781 where the Islamic East was celebrated in the great Egyptian Hall. There can be little doubt about the priority of scholarly Oriental interests in the minds of the young man and his tutor. After reading d'Herbelot, Beckford chose as the protagonist of his Oriental novel the ninth Caliph Vathek, al-Wathik Bi'llah (AD 842-847 / AH 227-232) who had absolute sovereignty over the Arabian Empire and a strong interest in the sciences, literature and astrology but whose abuse of power led to an early death at the age of thirty six.[9]

Perhaps inspired by d'Herbelot, Beckford wrote *Vathek* in French. The tutor Henley saw his particular task as marshalling the scholarly references in a series of Notes and in translating the completed novel into English. During his enforced exile in Switzerland, Beckford was powerless to control Henley, who published *Vathek* in 1786 without any reference whatsoever to Beckford by name and implying in the preface that the work was from a genuine Arabic original MS which he had edited and translated himself. Beckford responded to this theft by publishing *Vathek* later in the same year in Lausanne in its first French-language version.

The only English version published was Henley's until 1816 when Beckford again published *Vathek* with revisions to the text and to Henley's notes, in contrast to the Lausanne edition which had included only a few sketchy notes. Beckford, by then well versed in the culture and languages of Arabia and Persia, was

determined to give prominence to his own creative reconstruction of Islamic culture in the main text. In the unpublished *The Episodes of Vathek*, Beckford left future readers to track, without the benefit of notes, his imaginary journeys to other Islamic kingdoms: northwards to lands bordering the Caspian and Aral Seas, and westwards into Egypt.[10]

The rich variety of reader response to *Vathek* shows how kaleidoscopic the reading of that novel can become. Some readers single out for praise the ironic elements in the oriental tales which echo the work of Beckford's relative Count Anthony Hamilton, whose four parodies of Galland's tales, written in the early part of the eighteenth century, greatly appealed to Beckford's sense of the deflationary and the subversive.[11] Some readers cling to the 'Gothic' tendencies of terror and suspense often associated with novels such as *The Castle of Otranto* and *Frankenstein* in spite of the fact that the Gothic-like scenes in *Vathek* invariably end in bathos.[12] Some readers seize on the autobiographical details which show Beckford settling scores in some of the characterization – indeed, Lord Byron identified Beckford as 'unhappy Vathek' whose sad day, following some nameless crime, led to scorn and solitude.[13]

What most interests me about *Vathek* is what may well have most excited the middle-aged Beckford about *Vathek* in the years leading up to its 1816 publication – the apocalyptic dimension in the novel's apotheosis. Beckford's apocalyptic mood was well caught in a letter to Franchi dated Saturday 19 October 1811: 'to inspire some hopes of seeing this infamous realm of cruel, bitter, coarse and hypocritical brutes ended by a stroke of the tail of the comet. Ah, dear Comet, suppress the suppressors, the false novelists, the false prophets, the false Kings and the false Shepherds ...'[14] The images of storms and eruptions attracted Beckford in the Apocalyptic Sublime art of John Martin's *The Capture of Babylon* (1819) and Francis Danby's *The Opening of the Sixth Seal* (1828), which powerfully depicted landscapes

vibrant with social and political allegory. In 1833, after reading Disraeli's *Alroy*, Beckford wrote: 'The halls of Eblis, the thrones of the solimons are for ever present to his mind's eye, tinted with some what different hues from those f the original; but pertaining of the same awful and dire solemnity.'[15] At its thrilling climax, the tale of *Vathek* is Beckfordian Apocalypse. The Caliph, arm in arm with the Princess Nouronihar, remains unrepentant for a thousand crimes and looks to his legacy: 'I have traversed a sea of blood, to acquire power … deem not that I shall retire, when in view of the port … Let the sun appear! Let him illume my career!' After humiliation in the great hall of the Islamic Hell, presided over by the Eblis, the Prince of Evil as a young man seated on a globe of fire, the guilty couple realize what they must finally forfeit for their betrayal of Mahomet – the most precious gift of heaven: HOPE: 'Vathek beheld in the eyes of Nouronihar nothing but rage and vengeance; nor could she discern aught in his, but aversion and despair.'[16]

Moore's *Lalla Rookh*

> Feramorz was a youth about Lalla Rookh's own age, and graceful as that idol of women, Crishna – such as he appears to their young imaginations, heroic, beautiful, breathing music from his very eyes, and exalting the religion of his worshippers into love … For the purpose of relieving the pauses of recitation by music, the young Cashmerian held in his hand a kitar, such as in old times the Arab maids of the West used to listen to by moonlight in the gardens of the Alhambra. (*Lalla Rookh*)

When Byron published his Turkish tale *The Corsair* in 1814, he included an effusive dedication to his friend the Irish poet Tom Moore which proclaimed that Moore was among the foremost of Ireland's patriots and would very soon find parallels in the East for the wrongs of Ireland, the magnificent and fiery spirit of her sons and the beauty and feelings of her daughters.[17] Moore had

already begun to draft versions of oriental tales, which would be published a few years later as *Lalla Rookh*. Moore did his oriental journeying in the libraries of two rich patrons who had assembled notable collections of books about the Orient: Lord Moira of Donington Park, Derbyshire and Lord Lansdowne of Bowood House, Wiltshire.[18]

Only too keenly aware of the pitfalls of drawing on Oriental sources in the context of the pioneering scholars such as Sir William Jones and conscious of the limitations of his armchair-traveller's view of the Orient, Moore passed the drafts of *Lalla Rookh* for comment to his friend Samuel Rogers to whom Moore dedicated the published work. Eventually the sequence of Moore's four oriental tales was structured by means of a vivid prose narrative of the progress of the journey of the Mughal Emperor Aurengzebe's daughter Lalla from Delhi to Bucharia in Cashmere to marry the king of Bucharia's son, which included a Persian minstrel Feramorz on board who recounts the tales to engage the travelling company, much to the pleasure of Princess Lalla and the disapproval of Fadladeen, the Chief Nazir of Bucharia, who grows increasingly convinced that the Minstrel's tales are subversive.[19]

In the tumultuous reception given to *Lalla Rookh* in many languages across many countries, little attention was given to the parallels in the East for the wrongs in Ireland. By depicting the characters as mustachioed and turbaned men with pistols and scimitars thrust into sashes and as women who were light-skinned and elegantly dressed, the early illustrators assembled a gallery of Byronic-looking characters which suggested that the tales had little or nothing to do with Ireland. Some twenty years later in a reference to the tale 'The Fire-Worshippers', Moore explained how he had found in the history books a parallel between, on the one hand, the fierce struggle between the Ghebers, or the ancient Fire-Worshippers of Persia, and their haughty Moslem masters; and, on the other hand, the cause of Irish freedom from the Act of

Union with Britain enacted in 1801– a patriotic sentiment which lay at the heart of many of Moore's 'Irish Melodies'.[20] In the same Preface, Moore reminded his readers that he had studied the whole range of 'Oriental reading as was accessible to me.'[21] 'The Fire Worshippers' tells the tale of the lovers, Hafed and Hinda, who are caught up in the just war of Gheber rebellion against Arabian oppressors and whose deaths will live on in the memories of the fair and the brave across the world: Moore is not only portraying freedom-fighting within the Islamic world but suggesting a powerful metaphor for the rebellion of Robert Emmet, Moore's friend at Dublin University, who was executed in 1803 for his rejection of English authority in Ireland. In the other powerful tale 'The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan', the leader of the Persian province who claims to be the incarnation of deity is in reality a villainous False Prophet who engulfs his people in an unjust revolution – the tale has warnings about false prophets within the Islamic world and Ireland's temptation to glorify the pseudo-liberation of the French Revolution.

The two other tales, 'Paradise and the Peri' and 'The Light of the Haram', draw much from Islamic wisdom about the true nature of reconciliation in a world of conflicts. The romantic *tour de force* of *Lalla Rookh* stems from the way in which the Cashmerian Minstrel Feramorz becomes a mirror image of the Irish Minstrel Moore at the very moment when Feramorz reveals to Lalla that he is her future husband and a King who will endeavour to give the Cashmerian people an era of justice and peace, which is what Moore dreamed of seeing accomplished in the land of his own birth.

Hope's *Anastasius*

> The seemingly bold measure had been preparing in petto, and the unexpected dilemma to which I was reduced, may only be said to have fixed the period of its execution … The arguments appeared to me so conclusive, that I had only been watching for an

> opportunity to throw off the contemptuous appellation of Nazarene, and to become associated with the great aristocracy of Islamism ... with a pang I quitted for the strange sound of Selim, my own and beloved name of Anastasius , given to me my father. (*Anastasius*)

When Thomas Hope anonymously published in 1819 *Anastasius or Memoirs of a Greek; written at the close of the Eighteenth century*, a book in three volumes about travelling across the Ottoman Empire, the immediate stunned reaction from the critics was that such a book could have been written only by Byron. In 1820 Hope revealed his identity as the famous London collector and patron who had travelled far and wide to the places visited by his main character during his Grand Tour of the Ottoman empire, some twenty years previously. Some critics continued to doubt the authorship of *Anastasius*, simply because they could not imagine Hope writing about anything other than styles in furniture, costume, or interior decoration which usually appealed to the rich and the powerful with a passionate taste for the Regency neo-classical revival in the arts.[22]

During the thirty years following its publication, Hope's travel book, with its constantly shifting scenes of action, became popular in Europe and America in various editions and provided its readers with a range of vivid impressions of the East which was the product of both Hope's wide reading and extensive travelling. In common with *Vathek* and *Lalla Rookh*, *Anastasius* has notes attached to the end of the volume, but these amount to only brief, helpful explanations of Turkish words, Eastern customs and historical references.[23]

Hope's protagonist is Anastasius Sotiri, the youngest son of a wealthy Greek family, who was born during the 1860s on the island of Chios. What causes Anastasius to leave home for a life of adventure is an unhappy love affair with the daughter of the French consul for whom his father works as drougeman, or interpreter. The early experiences of the young Greek in

Constantinople provides him with experiences of living among the rich and powerful in what remains of former visual splendour, and surviving among the homeless poor and criminal classes.

A key episode in the first volume is when, fleeing for his life from the servants of a former lover, he darts into a mosque and, for sheer survival, promptly declares himself to be a Muslim convert and adopts the name of Selim.

What follows in the second volume is a vivid depiction of the Muslim convert's rite of passage into an at first bewildering world where he quickly succeeds in being accepted as a Mamluke in Egypt under the patronage of the Bey. Anastasius/Selim revels in the new worlds open to him and hurls himself into a life of war and love as an Ottoman soldier during a period of changing alliances in an Empire under threat of social and political disintegration.

In the third volume Anastasius/Selim has a brief tragic yet long remembered love affair with the Greek Euphrosyne; on discovering that Euphrosyne has died after the birth of their son Alexis, Anastasius/Selim makes provision for the child to be cared for before adventuring into the Arabian desert where he prays as a Muslim at Mecca and Medinah, and joins the Wahhab tribe where he finds friendship with Omar and love with Omar's sister, Aische. After his time with the Wahhabes, Anastasius seeks out his son Alexis and attempts to resettle in the open city of Trieste but Alexis dies on arrival in the city. The breakdown of the friendship with his close childhood friend Spiridion causes Anastasius/Selim to become disillusioned with the inward-looking culture of late-eighteenth-century Greece; and after retiring from being a successful merchant on the Bosporus in his late thirties, Anastasius retreats to a small unnamed village in Austria with a new friend Conrad to whom he dictates his memoirs.

In Hope's version of the Islamic Oriental tale, Anastasius/Selim, the Ottoman soldier, has his eyes opened to the

beautiful treasures of Ottoman culture on many levels and his heart influenced by the deeply felt loves and friendships which he forms among various Islamic sects; yet Selim never sheds his Greek origins as Anastasius. Hope chose the novel form for his travel book became he aimed to dramatize the story of the inner dialectic between the colonized Christian Greek and the colonizing Muslim Turk. The tragedy of Anastasius/Selim was Hope's way of highlighting the perilous state of European and Ottoman civilizations towards the end of the eighteenth century, whose worsening crisis was due to the failure of European countries to establish lines of effective communication between Christian West and Muslim East. There can be little doubt that Hope's actual journeying across the Ottoman Empire contributed much to the breadth of humanity shown in so many of the characters to be found travelling across the pages of his masterpiece.

Afterword

These three novels were widely read and appreciated for different reasons during the Regency Age and afterwards. *Lalla Rookh* ran to the most editions and achieved the widest fame at home and abroad, the last edition appearing in 1901, after which the work was consigned by hostile critics to oblivion until a recent revival of interest in it as an example of Islamic Orientalism not taken into account by Said in *Orientalism*.[24] *Anastasius* continued to be reprinted until about 1849, after which it was likewise consigned by unsympathetic critics until the very recent appearance of a critically annotated edition in a single volume.[25] *Vathek* has rarely been out of print and has had, over many generations, its dedicated bands of enthusiasts and, of the three works under survey here, it has been the most often studied by scholars. All three works first attracted great attention during the period of vast British colonial expansion into the Islamic world. The contrasting views of the Islamic Orient captured in eloquent words by

Beckford, Moore and Hope can still illuminate in distinctive ways encounters between the West and the East at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Notes

1. See Robert L. Mack (ed.), *Arabian Nights' Entertainments* (Oxford: University Press, 1995). By 1780 James Beatie was suggesting Galland had not really translated from Arabian MSS – it was a case of the Frenchman inventing stories set in the East which were voyeuristically refashioned to conform to 'the fashionable forms of Parisian civility'. See *The Works of James Beatie*, ed. R. J. Robinson (London: Routledge, 1996), 510.
2. See Ross Ballaster, *Fabulous Orients: Fictions of the East in England 1662-1785* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) and the companion anthology; Ross Ballaster (ed.), *Fables of the East: Selected Tales 1666-1785* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), for the most comprehensive study of the vast traffic of narrative between Orient and Occident in the eighteenth century.
3. Henri de Boulainvilliers, *The Life of Muhammed* (London: DARF, 1983), a facsimile of the first English edition.
4. It seems most likely that Sale, a practising English solicitor, learned his Arabic and acquired his rare MMS of Persian, Turkish and Arabic origin while remaining in London, in spite of some claims that he spent about twenty-five years in Arabia.
5. *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. Robert Halsband, 3 vols. (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1965-7).
6. Giovanni Paolo Marana, *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, selected and ed. A.J. Weitzman (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970). Due to the sheer popularity of this work, Samuel Johnson gave the etymology of the term 'Spy' as 'Asiatick'.
7. Sir William Jones, *Selected Poetical and Prose Works*, ed. Michael Franklin (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1995) See 'Oriental Jones' in Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies* (London: Allen Lane, 2006), 122-6.
8. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978) for a mainly political survey of the West's interest in the East. The emphasis in Said's widely read work on the colonial context of Orientalism tended to overplay the colonial prejudices and undervalue the genuine passion for knowledge on the part of his Orientalists.

9. William Beckford, *Vathek*, ed. Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: World Classics, 1983) for Appendix II, p. 167 'Account of Vathek from d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque Orientale* (1697), pp. 911-12'.
10. William Beckford, *Vathek with The Episodes of Vathek*, ed. Kenneth W. Graham (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001), for 'The Explanatory Footnotes and Beckford's Orientalism', pp. 374-80 & 'Geography and Maps', pp. 389-93.
11. Hamilton's four infamous parodies of Galland, *Le Bélier*, *Fleur d'Epine*, *Zeneyde*, and *Les quatre Facardins* were first published in 1730, ten years after the author's death. According to Roger Lonsdale, much of Beckford's 'comic tone as a whole can be related more closely to Hamilton than to any earlier fiction'; see *Vathek* (Oxford Classics), p. xxvii.
12. Peter Fairclough (ed.), *Three Gothic Novels*, with introduction by Mario Praz (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968).
13. See Jon Millington, 'Beckford and Byron' in *The Beckford Journal* 1, (1995), 41-46, for an account of Byron's second thoughts about the infamous stanza 'Dives'.
14. Boyd Alexander (ed.), *Life at Fonthill* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957), 107. See my essay ' "Ah Dear Comet…": Beckford and the Apocalyptic Art of West and Danby' in *The Beckford Journal* 3 (1997), 8-19.
15. R. J. Gemmett (ed.), The Consummate Collector: William Beckford's Letters to His Bookseller (Norwich: Michael Russell, 2000), 186.
16. The quotations are taken from the Oxford Classics edition of *Vathek*, pp. 105-119.
17. *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McCann, 7 vols. (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1980-1993), iii, 148-9.
18. Thérèse Tessier, *La Poésie Lyrique de Thomas Moore* (Paris: Didier, 1976), 466-470, for the list of over a hundred books included by Moore in his numerous footnotes in *Lalla Rookh*.
19. Thomas Moore, *Lalla Rookh: An Oriental Romance* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees Orme, Brown, 1817). The four oriental tales in verse were entitled: 'The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan' (2138 lines), 'Paradise and the Peri' (512 lines), 'The Fire Worshippers' (2226 lines), and 'The Light of the Haram' (741 lines).
20 Moore regularly published between 1808 and 1834 over a hundred Irish song lyrics. See *Moore's Irish Melodies: The Illustrated 1846 Edition* (New York: Dover Publications, 2000). The illustrations were by Daniel Maclise.

21. See *Lalla Rookh* (London: Longmans, 1961) for Moore's Preface, pp. ix-xxiv. Sir John Tenniel in a sequence of sixty-nine illustrations for this edition brilliantly responded to the Gothic theatricality and Symbolist drama which Moore had woven from Islamic cultures.
22. See David Watkin and Philip Hewat-Jaboor (eds.), *Thomas Hope, Regency Designer* (London and New York: Yale University Press, 2008).
23. Hope included descriptions of Ottoman interiors, artefacts and clothing in *Anastasius*, and on his Grand Tour of the Ottoman Empire made many drawings of life as he observed it on his travels which included peasant life in Hungary, Egyptian pyramids, Byzantine churches, the great mosques, fortresses on the Bosphorus, Istanbul interiors etc. The Thomas Hope collection is held by the Benaki Museum, Athens. See 'A Case of Regency Exoticism' by David Watkin & Fani Maria Tsigakou in *Cornucopia* 1993-4, 52-59.
24. 'Thomas Moore and Orientalism' in Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 87-122, and 'Thomas Moore's Lalla Rookh and the Politics of Irony' in Mohammed Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), 134-213.
25. *Anastasius: A Classic Travel Book*, in one vol. (The Long Riders' Guild Press, 2008). As this ground-breaking publication coincides with the 'Thomas Hope: Regency Designer' exhibition in London and New York, an unique opportunity has been presented for the full story of Thomas Hope's range of achievements, including that as a travel writer, to be brought fairly before the public eye.

Lisbon History: A Reappraisal

JOÃO DE ALMEIDA FLOR

Malcolm Jack, *Lisbon, City of the Sea: A History*
(London: I. B. Tauris, 2007. ISBN 978 1 84511 403 9)

Centuries of Anglo-Portuguese cooperation in military, diplomatic, economic and cultural fields have given birth to a wealth of literature focusing on the portrait of the physical and human features of Lisbon. Guidebooks, travelogues, memoirs, journals, letters etc. are the natural repositories of personal impressions, series of data, descriptions of monuments and other factual elements that have often been collected for the benefit of prospective British travellers and tourists. Nevertheless, Malcolm Jack's recent book *Lisbon, City of the Sea: A History* stands out as a unique, highly successful attempt to provide both Lusophile scholars and the general public with a scholarly, yet highly entertaining essay on the ways in which tradition underlies the development and present-day character of Lisbon's urban space and population.

The author rightly assumes that the complexity of his subject should best be tackled by adopting an all-encompassing approach so as to demonstrate how Lisbon as we know it is in fact the outcome of a historical process to be patiently reconstructed by means of a thorough exploration of successive layers that testify to various stages in urban development. The critical scrutiny of relevant information enables Dr. Jack not only to describe and interpret the specific changes brought about in each historical period but also to detect and highlight a number of constant, recurring features that reveal and define the identity and the spirit of the place. Such methodology generates a comprehensive view of Lisbon in so far as it makes the narrative of its historical development compatible with an awareness of permanence in

change, as certain typical themes and leitmotifs keep returning through the ages, albeit in different shapes and modulations. As a matter of fact, this method amplifies the field of research beyond the strict boundaries of history and leads the author to delve into the realm of myths, legends, and fables connected with Lisbon, with a view to discovering remnants of past cultures that lie embedded in the city. Thus Malcolm Jack´s vivid prose intertwines factual accuracy and fictional insight into a warp and weft pattern that provides the discriminating reader with constant intellectual challenges while fully complying with high standards of contemporary scholarly research.

One of the many sources of interest in this book lies in the mature way in which various disciplines are brought together in order to illuminate complex problems from various angles. The reciprocal influence of geography and history is the most obvious example, since the westernmost situation of Portugal in continental Europe, the threats presented by the frontier with Spain and the strategic position of the capital at the estuary of the Tagus are among the factors that have conditioned the course of historical events. In fact, overseas expansion has made up for the peripheral position of Portugal as a decisive factor in the country´s internal and external policy, namely the conquest of North African citadels, the voyages of discovery, exploration and colonisation along the shores of Africa and South America, and the establishment of a maritime route to India that granted access to the Far East. Thus Lisbon truly became the capital of what has been termed the Portuguese sea-borne empire and its character still bears traces of the magnificence that derived from this worldwide enterprise.

Besides, Portuguese culture came to absorb and integrate exotic, non-European elements in its literary and artistic heritage and such cross-cultural, multilingual contacts strongly reinforced the cosmopolitan character of Lisbon as a crossroads and meeting place of multiple civilisations. In Dr. Jack’s view, the capacity to

assimilate different contributions in an all-inclusive compound dates back to cross-cultural experiences in earlier ages, when successive waves of northern and Mediterranean peoples left their material and cultural imprints upon the country and none of these "was flung aside but synthesised into the fabric of the new nation"(p.19). One of the lasting signs of the coexistence of multiple communities in the city is reflected in the urban space where it is still easy to recognise the areas formerly associated with ethnic or religious minorities who became the victims of social or religious discrimination, whenever suspicion was aroused that they threatened the stability of orthodox religion or the powers that be.

The seven chapters of this work show that the author has succeeded in communicating both his expertise in cultural history and his strong personal affection for the city. In fact the book draws on a wide range of in-depth, first hand, rigorous knowledge of bibliographical and iconographic materials to which Malcolm Jack has added his direct observation of people and places. In short, taking the present as his starting-point he makes us realise how the past is very much alive in the poetic voice of Camões, Bocage or Pessoa and survives beneath the patina of Lisbon façades, patios, hills, piazzas, streets and dead ends.

The work surveys every aspect of urban life by sketching a colourful pageant-like panorama where the most relevant facts and decisive turning points are duly thrown into relief. The adoption of Italian models into the flowering of Renaissance literary culture, the pomp and lavish lifestyle at the Manueline court, the exquisite nautical motifs of architectural design, together with the distinctive character of Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Neoclassical, Romantic, Modernist and Postmodernist styles in the visual arts are some of the most picturesque scenes fully described in the book. In addition, Lisbon is also tragically depicted as the site of disaster and natural catastrophe as the combined effects of the 1755

earthquake, tidal waves and fires hit the once flourishing, opulent and populous city and reduced it to a scene of apocalyptic destruction, desolation and horror that challenged the optimistic beliefs of enlightened philosophers and theologians everywhere in Europe. Nevertheless, under the centralised, dictatorial rule of Pombal this dramatic event had positive consequences in so far as Lisbon´s phoenix-like rebirth was deeply influenced by a uniform, pragmatic, planning of the riverside area whose geometric layout became an architectural emblem of the eighteenth century bourgeois cult of rational order. Furthermore this design set the precedent for the orderly coordination of main urban functions and their allotment to specific areas, which lies at the basis of the expansion of Lisbon down to the present, although some districts still maintain residual traces of a rural environment often embedded in open spaces, amid contemporary structures of glass and reinforced concrete.

By way of conclusion, one of the most alluring features of the book is the admirable encyclopedic way in which Lisbon past and present secure the centre of attention, from which lines radiate connecting the development of the city with the worldwide framework of Portuguese cultural history as expressed in literary, visual and musical arts. Considering that Malcolm Jack's Lisbon essay will no doubt attract a wide readership it seems apposite to add that Beckfordians in particular will certainly find plenty of food for thought in Chapter 5 ("Foreigners' City"). This is mainly devoted to Anglo-Portuguese relations over the centuries and contains a survey of texts by Richard Twiss, James Murphy, Robert Southey, Lord Byron, Baretti, Link and H. C. Andersen that continued the tradition of Portuguese travelogues where Beckford's innovative contributions played such a decisive role.

Theodore Gethyn Williams, MBE, FRICS 1924-2008

AMY FROST

It is possible to state that without the knowledge and dedication of Theo Williams the restoration of Beckford's Tower would not have been quite so successful. A trustee of Bath Preservation Trust for many years, Theo had been instrumental in aiding the Trust through the restoration of No. 1 Royal Crescent. When the Bath Preservation Trust became the Trustee of the Beckford Tower Trust in January 1993, Theo joined the Council of Management for the Tower acting as Honorary Surveyor and general voice of reason concerning the Tower building. His knowledge and experience of historic buildings and their quirks was invaluable throughout the entire restoration project from putting together the Heritage Lottery Fund grant application to producing his own extensive photographic archive of the restoration process. Always the first to rein in the enthusiasm of the Tower Council of Management if plans and ideas became a little too fantastical, Theo's worst-case scenario more often than not came true, and ensured that we were prepared for all eventualities. It was his realistic and professional approach to his work that led Theo to be involved with the Landmark Trust as both surveyor and Trustee for many years, a role that led to him being awarded his MBE.

Theo's input, knowledge and experience concerning the building was only outweighed by his inexhaustible enthusiasm for knowledge, witnessed in his huge library of architectural books, many of which contain handwritten notes inserted in between the pages.

In the years before he left Bath Theo had been slavishly preparing a wealth of material documenting the repairs and maintenance of the Tower, as well as the restoration, and on leaving Bath he deposited with the Beckford Tower Trust an extensive archive that is an invaluable resource in the understanding of the Tower and its history. Above all it will be for his never-ending support of all those involved with the Tower and its operations that Theo will be best remembered.

On a personal note my introduction to the anatomy of Beckford's Tower by Theo will be forever etched in my mind. On a clear and crisp

September morning, having just met him for the first time, we ascended the Tower staircase. On opening the door between two of the gold columns of the Lantern he indicated the tiny foot-wide gutter and barked, 'Go on my dear, step out'. As a young historian, I could not have asked for a more comprehensive (or terrifying) induction to the building and its glories.

Theo Williams died in Leeds General Infirmary on 19th March 2008.

Theo Williams checking up on the repairs to the cast iron roof and columns of Beckford's Tower during a visit to Dorothea Restorations in Bristol, 1998.

Notes on Contributors

João de Almeida Flor is Professor of English Language, Literature and Culture in the University of Lisbon. His doctoral thesis was on Robert Browning; he has written widely on English and Portuguese Romantic literature as well as translating the poetry of Wilfred Owen, D. H. Lawrence and T. S. Eliot into Portuguese.

John Fox is now retired following 46 years with the Ministry of Defence as a Physicist / Electronic Engineer. Now able to follow Ham Radio interest of 55 years (G3KHR), he attempts to be self-sufficient for the kitchen from a large garden, with evenings spent on family history. John is an eighth-generation descendant from Alderman William Beckford.

Danaë Stanton Fraser is a Reader in Psychology at the University of Bath, researching technologies for children. She is a ninth-generation descendant from Alderman William Beckford

Mike Fraser is a Senior Lecturer in Computer Science at the University of Bristol, and is currently designing robotic and haptic systems for public settings. In his occasional spare time he explores the genealogy of Alderman William Beckford.

Amy Frost has been the Administrator of Beckford's Tower & Museum in Bath since 2002. Her interest in Beckford began while studying for an M.Phil. in Architectural History that specialised in the Gothic Revival. In 2004 she curated the exhibition *John Wood and the Creation of Georgian Bath* at the Building of Bath Museum and is currently researching for her Ph.D. on the life and work of Henry Edmund Goodridge, the architect of Beckford's Tower.

Jon Millington is on the Council of Management of the Beckford Tower Trust and wrote the Guide to the Tower. For the 1976 Beckford Exhibition he produced the slide show and contributed to the Catalogue the essays 'Man of Letters' and 'Bibliophile Extraordinary'. To mark the 150th anniversary of Beckford's death he devised the exhibition 'Souvenirs of Fonthill Abbey' He edited the *Beckford Tower Trust Newsletter* (1980-1994) and the *Beckford Journal* from 1995 to 2005. He is the author of the forthcoming *William Beckford: A Bibliography*.

Jerry Nolan is a London-based freelance writer. He has written the Introduction to the most recent edition of Thomas Hope's *Anastasius*. His essay 'The English / Irish Ring and Its Victorian Popularity', first given as a paper at the 'Conquering England' Conference at the National Portrait Gallery in 2005, has been published in *Irish Theatre in England* (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2007). Ongoing research into Beckford remains a top priority. Further information can be found at www.jerrynolanwriter.com.

Michael Ranson spent most of his career as an officer in the Royal Army Educational Corps where he was a Lecturer in International Politics / Strategic Studies. Now retired, his research interests include the Royal Navy in the early eighteenth century, Admiral Benbow (on whom he has been writing a biography 'for years'), and eighteenth century diarists. He is also a member of the Sidney Smith Association. Reading about William Beckford led him to Peter Beckford, who, he feels, merits more investigation, a task he hopes to do when time allows.

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The Society, founded in 1995, has the following aims:

1. To promote an interest in the life and works of William Beckford and his circle.

2. To encourage Beckford studies and scholarship through exhibitions and publications, including an annual Journal and occasional Newsletters.

3. To hold an annual Beckford lecture or symposium.

4. To support the preservation of Beckford's Tower, Bath, and other buildings, gardens, landscapes and objects associated with William Beckford and his circle.

Membership of the Society is open to anyone interested in William Beckford who wishes to further its objectives. There is a minimum annual subscription of twenty pounds. Applications for membership should be sent to:

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Articles for inclusion in *The Beckford Journal* for 2009 should be submitted to the Editor (email: richard.a.allen@ntlworld.com) by 1 April 2009.

ISSN 1359-8503