



It doesn't happen very often, but then this has been an exceptional year in many respects, not least the predictability of rain dominating our so-called summer. Despite its continued threat, many of us arrived at the garden party quietly hoping that the sun would fight its way through the dark clouds and provide us with a hot and sunny afternoon, but it was not to be. Not that the rain dampened our spirits or prevented us from having a fabulous time among the unique group of new follies created by Vernon Gibberd and Derek Bruce.

Weather conditions had made a welcome change by the time we arrived at Brightling earlier this month to mark the 250th anniversary of John Fuller's birth. During what turned out to be a gloriously sunny day, we managed to round up a few locals who were otherwise peacefully going about their business, and encouraged the Rector to join us and provide an early-nineteenth century prayer by the pyramid mausoleum before raising a toast to Fuller's life and achievements with a glass of port. From there a comparatively gentle walk led us to all of Fuller's key follies and a picnic in the shadow of his most famous folly, the Sugar Loaf. We are, as ever, grateful to the people of Brightling for making us welcome and allowing us to trample over so much of their land and countryside.



There is a number of events planned to mark John Fuller's extraordinary life. The next one takes place on 22 September and includes the ringing of a Quarter Peel by the Sussex Bell Ringing Association, a talk by local author Geoff Hutchinson, the playing of the wonderful barrel organ, a follies walk, and even Morris Dancing in front of Brightling Park. All of this is followed in the evening by a song and dance and barbeque. Details of this and other events are published on websites like <http://madjackfuller.blogspot.com> and www.johnmadjackfuller.homestead.com.

On the subject of events - there are still some visits planned for the rest of this year, including a trip to Edinburgh, a tour of Croome Park and a last minute invitation to return to The Forbidden Corner at Tuppill Park to see the latest additions. Details of these excursions are given at the end of this bulletin.

Andrew Plumridge
andrew@follies.fsnet.co.uk

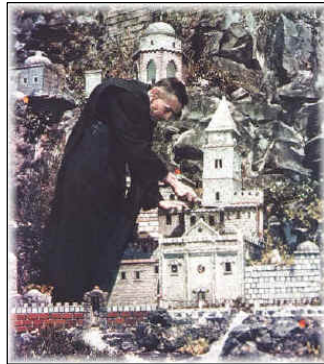
Joseph Zoettl's Grotto, Alabama

One of the pleasures of flying to the United States as often as I do is the opportunity to travel its byways and visit follies that are comparatively unknown back home. Many turn out to be second rate structures erected by someone with an ounce of eccentricity and who the local people now celebrate as a way of attracting the mighty tourist dollar. Every now and then, however, there is a real discovery and something worth writing about, such as the Ave Maria Grotto at Cullman in the Southern State of Alabama.



This is, of course, a religious monument and no disrespect is intended by classing it as a folly. There comes a moment, however, when something is so completely over the top that it crosses the threshold of normality and enters the domain of follydom. There are also many examples around the World where religion and follies sit comfortably together.

The grotto was built single-handedly by the Benedictine Monk, Brother Joseph Zoettl. Born in the Bavarian town of Landshut in 1878, the young Joseph was maimed in an accident that left him disfigured with a hunch-back. To avoid being taunted for his deformity he entered the local Order of Saint Benedict and was later moved to America to join the St Bernard Abbey in 1892. There he was asked to look after the Abbey's power supply, and when not otherwise engaged in stoking boilers and keeping the electricity supply well maintained, he amused himself by building miniature shrines. The first of these were erected in the monastery's recreation grounds, but as the number grew, the collection was moved to its present site and officially named the Ave Maria Grotto on 17 May 1934.



Over a period of nearly forty years, Brother Joseph was sent materials from all over the World and used them to create 125 miniature churches, shrines and other buildings covering the three acre site. At the age of 80 he built his last – the Basilica at Lourdes – in 1958, and died three years later in 1961.

Hop Castle, Winterbourne

Hop Castle sits in isolation in the Berkshire parish of Winterbourne, just to the north of the M4 and to the west of Chieveley. It was built in 1790 as a Georgian Hunting Lodge using brick walls faced with unknapped flint interspersed with animal bones and skulls.

The main body of the house is octagonal in shape and sits beneath an ogival octagonal roof. Its main feature is a fine octagonal room at first floor level, with a high ceiling and high-level niches for ornaments or small statues. The ground floor is essentially a half-basement; the floor is below ground level, with the 'front door' located at the back and the 'back door' at the side! On top of the outside walls, set on each of the four corners, are carved hop finials – hence 'Hop Castle' – although other articles have called them "urns" and even

"acorns". The folly has also been listed as "Hatt Castle." The main entrance hall and staircase walls and ceilings are covered in pebbles and a variety of shells, giving this area the appearance of a grotto.



Hop Castle was left derelict for many years but has recently been renovated. This included the introduction of a new damp-proof course and underpinning of the foundations. All the windows were replaced and four additional windows added to the front elevation and a conservatory added to the side. As a result it has been returned to a two-bedroom private residence.

Although the building has little recorded history, there are several stories associated with the folly. One is about secret underground tunnels leading from the house to a nearby farm, and to a public house on the main road. This may or may not be true, but building work in the basement revealed no sign of them.

Derrick Green

Folly of the Month: The Warder's Lodge at Knypersley, Staffordshire

Of all the staff needed to successfully run a country house and estate, the gamekeeper almost always seemed to receive the best of everything. In addition to an open air life, the peace and solitude of a woodland setting in which to live, and an opportunity to disappear whenever his boss came to call, he also enjoyed some of the best housing on the estate. Such was the case at Biddulph where the lucky gamekeeper lived in a remarkably handsome folly tower.

Warder's Lodge was built in 1829 by John Bateman, who chose for his site a rocky outcrop on the boundary of the Knypersley Hall and Greenway Bank estates. His miniature castle was built in the local red sandstone and served two functions: firstly as an eyecatcher to improve the landscape, and secondly, as a home for a key member of his estate staff. It was first occupied in 1830 by the Harrison family, and remained a family home until comparatively recent times.



Today the tower is owned by Staffordshire County Council, and stands remote from water and electricity, and many of the other luxuries of life. It is a such remote spot that it is often missed from books on follies whose authors are too easily seduced by the exotic creations of Bateman's grandson at Biddulph Grange. At the moment, however, salvation from further vandalism exists in the form of the Landmark Trust which has secured a lease with the Council and is seeking to convert it into another successful holiday home.



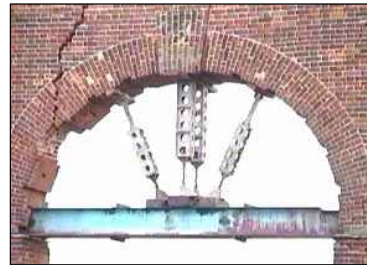
The Lodge is located at Ordnance Survey reference SJ 89 55. Our recommendation is to see it soon before restoration work starts and before you need a booking to do so.

Gobbets

My eye was caught by a picture of Lyveden New Bield in the latest Northamptonshire Enterprise Bulletin, with an offer to stay at Rushton Hall (now a country house hotel) for only £50 per person per night instead of the normal rate of £175 per night for a double room. So here's a chance to enjoy Sir Thomas Tresham's follies in style, including his Triangular Lodge and Lyveden New Bield itself. Details of the offer can be found at www.explorenorthamptonshire.co.uk.

- The *Chichester Observer* reported last week that a man who climbed 50-feet up Racton Tower near Chichester got stuck and had to call the Fire Brigade for assistance using his mobile phone. It took fire crews from both Emsworth and Chichester to lower him to the ground and return him to safety.
- In October 2006, Borbonesa, a group of four men who "make things", announced that they had begun to construct a folly on the Isle of Wight using rubble from a knocked-down helicopter factory building. Does anyone have news of their current progress?

- On the subject of news, does anyone have an update on the condition of Brookman's Arch at North Mymms in Hertfordshire?



The Brookmans Park Newsletter (www.brookmans.com) has been reporting damage to the folly for some time, and the arch has had to be supported on a steel brace to stop it from collapsing.

- The *Rutland and Stamford Mercury* reported one man's view of a proposal to erect a new monument to Queen Eleanor. In his letter the man writes: "If the monstrosity, at present known as Queen Eleanor's cross, is erected I suggest it should be known as Vision's Folly...[because]...it is neither a cross nor an obelisk..." His letter went on to suggest that a plaque be put on the monument stating: "This folly, part of a Gateway project was conceived and erected against the wishes of the townspeople by South Kesteven District Council, Lincolnshire County Council and an unelected body calling itself Stamford Vision. Those responsible are..., followed by the names of members of Vision and the two councils responsible. This would follow the old tradition of naming those responsible for public works...[since]...it is only fair that those responsible for the destruction of the heart of our ancient town and the squandering of so much public money should take the credit." Can anyone provide a picture of this obvious monstrosity?

- On 13 October Bill Tomlins will present a lecture on *Designing Paradise: Capability Brown at Gatton*. Tickets and further information, including a guided tour of the gardens, are available from patpay@gatton-park.org.uk, or from Pat Pay at the Foundation Office, Gatton Park, Reigate RH2 0TW

Forthcoming Events

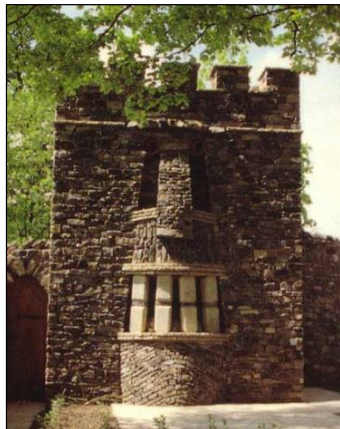
Friday, 05 to Sunday, 07 October – A visit to see the fantastic follies of Edinburgh and surrounding Lothian countryside. The current itinerary is:

- **Friday** – a walk to see St Bernard's Mineral Well and Calton Hill in central Edinburgh, finishing with dinner at Leith overlooking the Royal Yacht Britannia and a drink at Mylne's Folly.
- **Saturday** – a bus tour of Jamieson's Tower at Portobello, the grotto at Cockenzie House, Gosford House Mausoleum and Grotto, Luffness doocot and tower, Hopetoun Monument, and the Saltoun Doocot.
- **Sunday** – a bus tour of Dryden Tower at Bilston, Treggles Tower, Ramsay Monument, Hurley Grotto and Arthur's O'on at Penicuik, Cammo Tower at Turnhouse, and Midhope Tower at the House of the Binns.

Details available from andrew@follies.fsnet.co.uk. Please indicate if you are willing to drive a minibus on one or more of the days.

Saturday, 20 October – A late and unexpected addition to our list of events is a return visit to Tuppill Park at Coverham to see the latest follies and other surprises erected by Colin Armstrong and his infectiously amusing and brilliant architect Malcolm Tempest

The garden is a unique and fun collection of follies, tunnels and labyrinths all set in a beautiful corner of the Coverdale in North Yorkshire. Using a set of carefully devised clues printed on the entrance ticket guests navigate their way around a collection of architectural and sculptural delights, including a glass pyramid, subterranean grotto, look-out tower and much, much more. An unofficial code amongst visitors prevents me from telling more to avoid spoiling the surprises, but I can tell you that it provides an Alice in Wonderland type of experience for every adult who wants to re-live the fun of childhood.



If you would like to attend, please meet beneath the Clock Tower at Tuppill Park at 11:00 sharp. Details from andrew@follies.fsnet.co.uk

Sunday, 04 November – A visit to Croome Park in Worcestershire, including a guided walk with Mike Cousins and Mike Smith, National Trust manager.

Croome is one of the most important eighteenth-century parks in the country, being 'Capability' Brown's earliest commission after his employment at Stowe, and a site where he was to be periodically engaged for the rest of his life. Several of the more prominent 'follies', lie outside the immediate park, but most are accessible, such as Dunstall Castle (see *FOLLIES* magazine #66) or lie close to footpaths: Pirton Castle and the Panorama Tower. The most remote of course, but inexorably linked to Croome, is actually Broadway Tower! These are the creations of two of the most celebrated architects of the time: Robert Adam and James Wyatt.



Since its acquisition in 1996 by the National Trust, the transformation at Croome has been quite staggering. The first phase of restoration was completed last year, and several of the park's buildings now benefit from clearance, opening up of vistas, and restoration. The transformation of the grotto, for example, has been remarkable, but you'll have to come on the visit to really appreciate that. Walk and listen whilst the history of the park and its buildings and the glories of the period are brought to life by Mike Smith and Mike Cousins.



For tickets and further details call Elizabeth on 0121-447 7196 or follywaters@onetel.com