

## The Symposium of Bonhomie

What a symposium we had! On 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> November last year 57 members and guests crammed into the conference centre of Lydiard Park, a mainly 18<sup>th</sup> century country pile once owned by the Bolingbroke family now on the western edge of Swindon in Wiltshire. The event was a very good opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to our passion, embrace old friends and new, and enjoy some jolly bonhomie.

The six speakers on Day One were all special in their own way, each communicating their great enthusiasm and knowledge of their fields: Mike Cousins on Garden Buildings in the Chinese Taste; Laura Mayer on Humphry Repton; Isabel & Julian Bannerman on the creation of their (mainly) wooden folly projects, Iain Jackson on the remarkable garden 'city' built surreptitiously by Nek Chand in Northern India, which has been the subject of his research over 20 years; the delightfully dotty Lucinda Lambton on her love of beastly buildings, places of rest and recreation for our animal friends; and Henry Macrory who was so galvanised by a few lines in Gwyn Headley & Wim Meulenkamp's first edition of *Follies* that he rushed down to Witley Park in Surrey to break into the Underwater Smoking Chamber, and now has written a book *Ultimate Folly* about the fraudulent and scandalous life of its builder Whitaker Wright, reviewed in the last issue of *Follies* magazine.

Day Two started with more serious FF business including the presentation of the accounts, discussions of events and publications, as well as news of the sale of Ram Alley, a rather sorry-looking pile of stones contained in a small copse near Milton Keynes, for the sum of £10,000 which will be put in the charity's reserves. Members, notably Duncan Noel-Paton, were enthusiastic about the bonhomie and camaraderie that they enjoyed on folly outings and the joy that he and his friends experienced on reading the magazine every time it arrived.

The day continued with talks by Andrew Plumridge on the architect Roger Morris who palladianised Lydiard House, as well as Sarah Crisp-Finch who worked on the restoration of what was a very run-down house. Bought in 1943 by Swindon Borough Council, it was turned, along with the adjacent landscape park, into a place to admire and enjoy. The final treat was a tour of Lydiard Tregoze church, which was the place of worship and burial of the St John family, full of the most ornate statuary and tombs, including the Golden Cavalier, and a rare polyptych painting of the family in the chancel.

Many thanks to Andrew Plumridge for organising such a successful event!