Follies, Grottoes & Ancient Garden Buildings

# The Folly Fellowship

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Newsletter No: 1

Price £1

# Follevolution

## Andrew Plumridge

It was just before Christmas 1983, when walking hand-in-hand with my loved one through Oxford (who said the romance in follies has gone) that the germ of an idea to form a national folly society first developed. Admittedly, my mind should have been on other things considering the company, but having just sat through a lecture by Cedric Price in which I saw a photograph of a very unhappy and collapsing folly, I realised that something needed to be done to prevent the loss of this amazing structure.

With the impending gloom of finals, the idea was put at the back of my mind, but some years later when I was President of the Oxford University Architectural Society, I chanced upon a small article in the National Trust Magazine which immediately re-kindled my enthusiasm. Like lightening, I invited the article's author to Oxford - though he needed persuading - and his lecture on follies was much loved and remembered by all those present. Since that time, Gwyn Headley has become a good friend and his invaluable book, 'Follies - A National Trust Guide', has never been far from my side.

After some initial discussions, Gwyn and myself made some tentative approaches to various amenity societies, organisations and individuals, and were staggered by their generally enthusiastic response. Messages of support and good wishes flooded in; from Buckingham Palace, the Department of the Environment, English Heritage, SAVE Britain's Heritage, The Georgian Group and The Victorian Society to name a few, and from most organisations and individuals already connected with follies and our built environment.

Overnight, follies came back into the news. There was a highly successful exhibition in London, a documentary filmed by the BBC and talk of a series with Independent Television. Articles appeared in National Newspapers and Architectural Journals, new books appeared on the subject and an opening ceremony revealed a new and ambitious grotto in Kent. Even abroad, much interest has developed and copies of this newsletter are even now winging their way to America, Mexico, Australia, Malasia, Nigeria, Algeria, Italy, Switzerland, Germany and Holland.

The results of all our efforts, together with the exciting events given above, has unveiled a keen interest and a definite demand for a 'folly society'. The form with which that society will take has not yet been officially determined but I'm sure that the next few months will see long discussions to change that. In the meantime, to celebrate the anniversary of our decision to investigate the possible founding of a folly society, we have produced this newsletter to keep you informed of what has been happening on the folly front.

# Undermining Lord Berners'

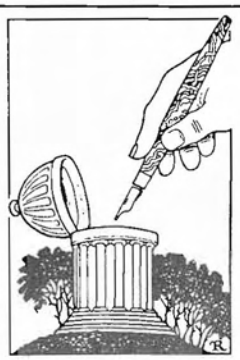
## Andrew Plumridge

A recent planning application to excavate sand from Folly Hill, Farringdon, has put the remarkable Lord Berners' Folly at risk of demolition.

Completed in 1935, Lord Berners' Tower is the last major folly tower to have been built in Britain and stands as the only tower in Oxfordshire. It is currently hailed as Britain's finest twentieth-century folly tower and one of the most important follies in Britian today.

Following objections from the Vale of White Horse District Council, local residents, and the founders of the Folly Fellowship, planning permission was refused in April 1987. The applicants, Hills of Swindon, are expected to appeal.

The folly, given to the people of Farringdon by the late Mr Robert Heber-Percy, was restored in 1983 and is accessible on about six Sundays each year at a cost of 20p.



# EDITORIAL

## Andrew Plumridge

The Fellowship's newsletter which, at present, will be an annual publication, is intended to serve as a forum in which folly owners, managers, restorers and enthusiasts can express their views, concerns, appeals and achievements. Its success, however, relies upon the continued donation of articles, illustrations and sponsorship.

Our first issue has been produced with the kind assistance of friends and colleagues who share a similar concern for the future of Britain's follies and the Fellowship would like to express its gratitude to all who have helped in its production.

The Fellowship intends to publish its second newsletter in January 1989 and articles for inclusion should be submitted before 1 November. Photographs and illustrations will be returned if requested.

We hope that you will enjoy reading this, the first, Folly Fellowship newsletter.

# Financially Supporting Restoration

## Andrew Plumridge

With the pressures of the twentieth-century bearing heavily on Britain's follies and garden buildings, their future has probably never looked so bleak.

Often built quickly and cheaply - effect being more important than sound construction - the fatal combination of neglect, vandalism, inaccessibility and the ravages of time, has already caused the loss of many fine follies and continually threatens the future of those few remaining.

Radnor Gardens Summerhouse - being restored by a Restoration Appeal

After seven years of working directly with historic buildings, it is a constant frustration to realise that of all the resources required for any restoration project - willpower, knowledge, enthusiasm and funding - it is a shortage of finance which continually hinders progress.

Current Government policy boasts that we, as individuals, have more money in our pockets to spend as we please. Concurrently, this also means that less financial support is available from Central Government to assist in restoration projects.

In 1987, the House of Commons Environmental Committee recommended that the Department of the Environment should direct extra funds to English Heritage to enable it to provide more grants to historic gardens and their buildings. The Minister's reply was that 'the Government would be happy for Engish Heritage to offer such grants but considers that this must remain a matter for them to decide in the light of their competing priorities'. In simple English, the Minister meant 'NO MORE CASH'.

The result of this attitude is that those private estates and national organisations who maintain our heritage, find economic survival a constant struggle. The limited financial resources available to them are, understandably, directed towards maintaining the 'main house' and any follies must remain camouflaged by the shrubbery and ignored for yet another year.

Limited financial help can be provided by Granting Organisations and Trust Funds, though these bodies are also finding themselves overstretched. Too many demands are made on their limited resources and, all too often, this implies that they must take qualitative judgements over who can gain financial assistance. A sad reality is that the so-called 'important buildings' - the Palaces, Castles, Country Houses and Stone Circles - receive priority over a comparatively insignificant Hermitage or Wellhead.

Chatelherault - recently restored by Strathclyde District Council

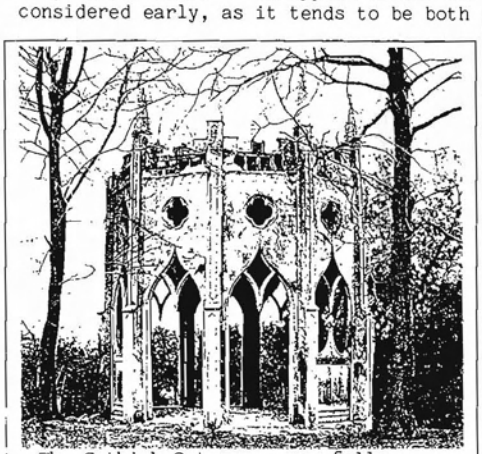
The granting system is, in theory, very simple although in practice this is not always so. It is subject to many bureaucratic delays; very high standards of workmanship and materials are demanded and can substantially increase the overall project cost; and, if grants are provided from public funds, it may be a requirement that the building should be accessible to the general public.

The Architectural Heritage Fund is a registered charity which provides cheap loan facilities for building preservation trusts and other charities undertaking preservation and rehabilitation works to historic buildings. It cannot provide funds for privately owned property, but charities can gain practical support by contacting Hilary Weir, The Architectural Heritage Fund, 17 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AW (tel: 01-930-0914).

For owners and enthusiasts, the road towards restoring a folly or a garden building is long and frustrating, but very worthwhile. An appeal should be considered early, as it tends to be both a lengthy and difficult process. The possibility of obtaining grants or tax relief will be part of this process, but, beware, the whole system is complex. If you are in any doubt, consult an expert - a good architect or accountant should be able to help you.

The experience of other groups, particularly regarding what you should and should not do, will be invaluable. Don't be afraid to ask, as these groups will generally be more than happy to share their knowledge.

Finally, remember that the Fellowship is being set up to help you. Although we are a new group, we can offer practical guidance and often start you in the right direction and put you in touch with the right people.



The Gothick Octagon - now fully restored by the Painshill Park Trust

# Setting a Precedent

## Andrew Plumridge

The Grade II listing of Moss Fenn Lodge, at Sea Palling in Norfolk as a 16th-century building of special architectural and historic interest, would be unremarkable but for the fact that it was only completed in 1983.

Built with second-hand materials and complete with over-sized timber beams, bulging walls and uneven floors, its owners, John and Simone Royal, are bemused by the Department of the Environment's unexpected tibute to the accuracy of their fraudulent mediaeval home.

The Department of the Environment Inspector who put the house on the statutory list of protected buildings, apparently, informed the Royals that he 'still feels that the place deserves its Grade II listing on grounds of rarity and eccentricity, if not antiguity'.

The worrying aspect is that this kind of error will cause a political, legal and administrative minefield with far reaching consequences. It brings into disrepute the whole system of listing buildings, implying that if the style is historical and a rarity and eccentricity value can be established, nothing else matters.

The statement should be viewed as good news for both folly owners and the Fellowship. Our follies are rare, eccentric and, generally, built to reflect earlier architectural styles. To that end, the Fellowship will be writing to the Secretary of State to recommend that all follies are added to the Statutory list of scheduled buildings. Top of the list will be the Leeds Castle Grotto.

# Leeds Castle Grotto

## Vernon Gibberd

The grotto at Leeds Castle evolved from a series of circumstances. It was not originally conceived as a feature on its own but arose naturally out of the designs for a new maze.

Leeds Castle is a house and grounds in private ownership, administered by trustees. Some years ago the newly appointed director, Andrew Grant, put forward a number of new projects, including the rebuilding of the old aviaries, a revised golf course, a new maze and extensive improvements to the layout and landscaping of the park.

The maze was designed by the architect (in consultation with Minotaur Designs) and he felt that some positive feature could be constructed to mark the centre, affording the visitor a small reward for solving the labyrinth. A mount seemed one possible solution, echoing the 17th century device for showing off one's park to one's friends, in this case providing a splendid view across the upper lake to the wooded slopes above, a view largely out of sight from ground level.

At first the mount was designed to have grass on a solid earth base, but the radius would have been too great and the earthworks too vulnerable to the tramp of so many feet. (Visitor figures now exceed 400,000 each year.) A structure of some kind therefore was one possible answer, perhaps as a dome, and at this point the idea of a tunnel exit was born, a route which could be both exciting, and also convenient for it meant a reduction of traffic congestion within the maze by a half. A hollow dome, into which the visitor entered to descend into the exit tunnel provided immediate possibilities for a grotto chamber.

The trustees needed convincing. Drawings were produced, tentative estimates were built up. The difficulties of such a task may be imagined. A grotto, like a temple or monument can cost a little or a great deal; there are virtually no limits.

The architect wanted a large, even formidable feature in the main chamber and decided on a huge face, Bomarzo style, through whose eyes the visitor could glimpse the grotto from outside. Water would cascade over this face into a stone basic from which it overflowed again down to a lower cavern.

Niches were provided around the grotto to allow bas relief figures to be built up in mortar and pebbles. At the top of the dome an open light funnel was conceived to allow light, and the elements, into the grotto below, and this now affords glimpses of the chamber for visitors peering down from the mount above.

Leaving the main grotto the itinerary follows a half flight of steps to a lower chamber and the start of the tunnel. For some time it was hoped that the cascade from the reservoir above could be refrigerated, like an ice rink, to provide a frozen cascade. Experts were consulted but in the end the difficulties proved insuperable. In a skating rink the cold air hangs over the ice floor, effectively controlling heat loss. In a vertical feature the heat loss is far greater and elaborate and cumbersome equipment would have been necessary.

As the structure grew out of the ground everyone became more interested and excited about the project. About this time the services of the sculptor Simon Verity and jeweller Diana Reynell were brought in. They had been jointly engaged in the restoration of Hampton Court House grotto as well as other grottoes throughout the country. They thought of the grotto in slightly different, less architectural terms, as a metamorphosis from the light of day into the underworld and back again through vicissitudes, Magic Flute like, to the real world again.

Verity and Reynell assembled a team together who worked all during the summer. Verity carved the sculptures and pieced together the rock work while Diana Reynell and her assistants made the figures in the niches - earth, water, fire and air - and the amazing shell work decorations. They covered the ceiling with coffered decorations of swans, symbols of Leeds Castle.

As the visitor descends the themes become gloomy. Bones emerge from the walls like fossils. In the heart of the underground chamber the walls are encrusted with exotic British minerals, crystals, Blue John calcite and quartz. Iron slag has also been used, as in eighteenth century grottoes, some with iron mouldings still protuding from the waste material.

As the visitor starts the tunnel the mood lightens with a shell Phoenix, representing rebirth, in its secret guarded cave. Animals are seen on the walls, a serpent twists into a stalactite column. Roots protude as if from mammoth forest trees above.

As daylight filters through from the tunnel end the visitor emerges into a square hermitage, formed by the retaining walls of the end steps and roofed by the bridge leading to the maze entrance above. This has been created by another artist, Julian Bannerman, largely out of burned wych elm which he obtained from Llanthony in Wales. In this he has continued the tradition of Thomas Wright, the 18th century astronomer and designer who designed the Hampton grotto and was widely influential in rustic design and architecture.

The Hermitage, alas, holds no hermit, but a cave opposite the end of the tunnel is as yet untenanted. This final element of the design is as yet unfinished though various ideas have been put forward for its completion.

From the Hermitage the visitor turns left to reach the open air up steps formed of iron slag. In front stands the cave and to the right, behind an iron grille ferns will be planted among a vast tumble of logs and ragstone rock. It is hoped that exotic ferns will be planted there during the warmer months along with hardier native varieties.

A final word on the structure. Sprayed concrete over a reinforcing armature was chosen, 'over-sprayed' to give as rough a texture as possible to the internal surfaces. This resembles traditional 'frostwork' when correctly applied. Had the extent of natural Kentish rag under the site been known, it is possible more use would have been made of it structurally. As it was it has proved immensely valuable for cladding the mound, forming the cave at the end and providing a rock garden for the fernery.




Cross Section through Upper Grotto.
Illustrations: Vernon Gibberd.

# Georgian Arcadia

## Architecture for the Park and Garden

Julia Abel-Smith

The Georgian Group celebrated its Golden Jubilee last year. Amongst its celebrations, the Group arranged an exhibition, both delightful and didactic, on the Garden Building. As this genre undoubtedly reached its apogee in the Georgian period it was an entirely appropriate subject. Moreover, as the Secretary of the Group pointed out in his foreward to the catalogue, "Garden buildings are a significant but neglected area of architectural history - neglected by historians and all too often, by their owners". The purpose of the exhibition was to highlight an intriguing building type and to draw attention to the conservation problems facing such vulnerable structures.

"Georgian Arcadia" was held in the gracious premises of the Colnaghi gallery in Old Bond Street. It was predominantly an exhibition of photographs. Over 300 pictures showed temples, follies, towers, mausolea, orangeries, farm buildings, kennels and grottoes. The main sources were the National Monuments Record, Country Life and the camera of the Secretary of the Group. Photographs from last year, 25 years ago or even 100 years ago were displayed in several different building categories.

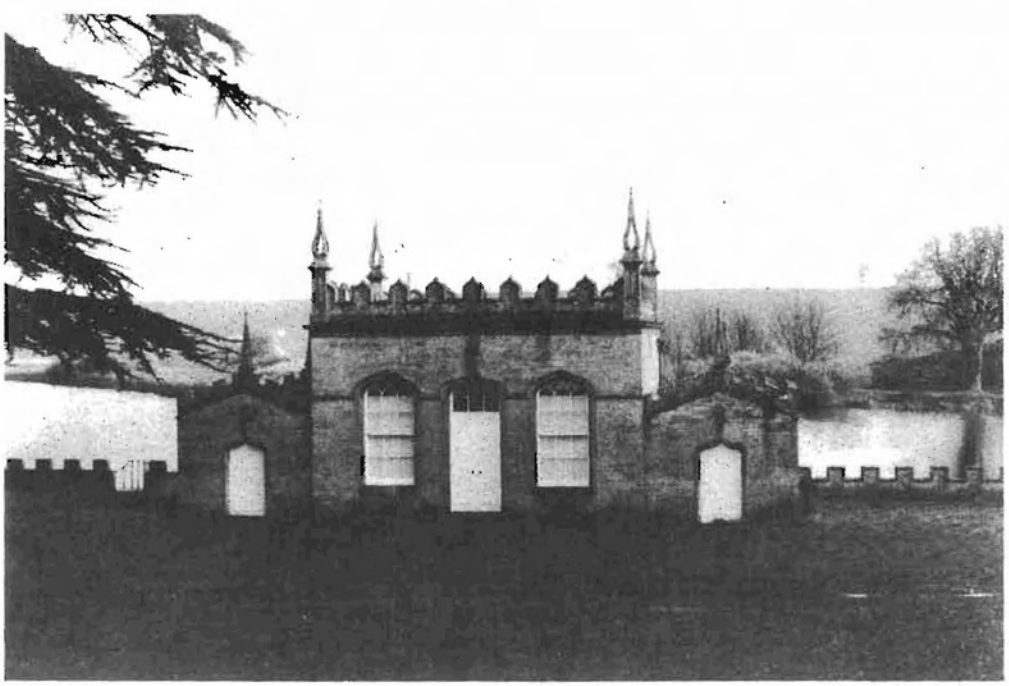
Alongside the photographs were a number of fascinating artefacts. The huge model for an elaborate gothic bridge at Boughton House in Northamptonshire had never been exhibited before. It appears to be the only Georgian model of a garden building to survive. Sadly the design was never executed. The Victoria & Albert Museum kindly lent two William Kent drawings for illustrations to Spenser's "Faerie Queene" which demonstrate the precision of his pen and the inventiveness of his mind. It was the belief of William Mason "that Mr Kent frequently declared he caught his taste in gardening from reading the picturesque descriptions of Spenser".

The organisers were particularly successful in searching out architects' drawings and contemporary paintings. The one which stole the show was Richard Wilson's "Ruined Arch, Kew Gardens". The clarity of the light is glorious - this is not Kew Gardens by the River Thames but a mystical Kew transported to the Roman campagna. The Arch had been built as a ruin in 1759. Equally interesting was a group of Nicholas Dall oils of Shugborough and a Balthasar Nebot of Hartwell House, showing the gardens before their drastic transformation in 1720s-30s.

Just a week before the exhibition opened, a view of the gardens at Honington Hall, Warwickshire by Thomas Robins sold for £45,000 historically, aesthetically and so it seems, financially. No Georgian garden exhibition is complete without one. "Georgian Arcadia" featured three of his watercolours of the gardens at Painswick and a view of an unidentified garden with a gothic pavilion.

One wall was devoted to conservation photographs. The losses made miserable viewing but were compensated a little by such pictures of the newly refurbished grotto at Hampton Court House and the Chateau at Gate Burton restored by the Landmark Trust.

In the past there has been much indifference shown towards garden buildings and their plight. If they are to be restored, public interest must be stimulated. The first of its kind, "Georgian Arcadia" has attracted considerable attention; a valuable step forward has been made.



The Gothick gimmickry of Fort Henry, Exton, Leicestershire.
Photo : Roger White.

# A folly in the making

## Christine Hall

Sitting at my desk in the offices of the BBC, I am trying to pluck up the courage to ring the vicar of Brightling Church in Sussex to ask if we can take a camel into the churchyard. Vicars can be funny about camels in churchyards, you know. Eventually I get through to explain that I'm researching a film for the '40 Minutes' documentary series about follies. We're keen to film Mad Jack Fuller's pyramid in the churchyard and would like permission for Gerald Scarfe, the producer and presenter, to ride up to it on camel-back. "No problem at all," came the reply, "and would you like us to mow the grass?" Well, this is more than I could have hoped for and just one of the many unusual tasks I confronted in the making of 'SCARFE'S FOLLIES'.

My brief as researcher was to find a variety of follies that had bizarre stories attached. There had already been a number of films on the subject and we wanted to steer clear of the obvious. Although Gerald had a limited interest in the follies themselves, he was fascinated by the eccentric characters who'd created them. So, after a meeting or two with folly expert Gwyn Headley, I set off in search of some of Britain's most extraordinary architecture; armed with a map, a pair of wellies and an open mind.

After a whistle-stop tour of the country, and much deliberation, we made our decisions and prepared for filming. Just the names of some of our chosen follies inspired our cameraman with renewed enthusiasm for unusual lenses, special effects, and, of course, plenty of overtime: The Secret Garden, Peterson's Folly, Lyvedon New Bield, Paxton's Tower and the aforementioned Mad Jack Fuller's Follies.

We started our tour in Hampshire. Gerald had really entered into the spirit of things and decided to build a folly of his own. With the help of two local builders, some high-kicking dancing girls and the plans firmly up his sleeve, he set out to build a most unusual construction, in the shape of a large..... no, you'll have to watch the film to find out. Gerald kept even us guessing right up until our last filming day, and what a surprise it turned out to be. Britain's newest folly.

'Never work with children or animals' is a well-known show-business maxim. We really should have taken note. As well as donning white tie and tails for his travels, Gerald insisted on touring the countryside on a variety of exotic beasts. The camel in the churchyard turned out to be the best-behaved. But Larry the Llama sank his teeth into Gerald's shin at every available opportunity, and Nellie the Elephant had to be bribed with polo mints before she'd lift a foot.

There was, however, worse to come. Much worse. The Vicar's Pulpit at Ashampstead in Berkshire was nearly to be our undoing. In the early nineteenth century one Isaac Septimus Nullis decided to get in some extra sermon practice; and being short of willing parishioners with enough time on their hands, he built his pulpit at the bottom of the garden and tried to convert the local farm animals in the neighbouring fields. I approached the local vicar who willingly agreed to preach from the pulpit to the heathen livestock of today. The neighbouring farmer was also very obliging when I asked if I could borrow half his animals (and his livelihood) for a few hours. The cows, donkeys and ducks he supplied, however, showed no interest in the techniques of documentary making. Perhaps they were camera-shy, perhaps they were bored with the sermon, perhaps they would have preferred walk-on parts in Emmerdale Farm; but whatever the reason they would not play ball. We quickly reduced our sights and settled on the idea of one duck sitting in front of the pulpit.

The farmer's son helped us to place the duck in position and was to stay with it until we were ready to film. "Slate 208, Take 1," cried the camera assistant. The farmer's son leapt out of shot, the clapperboard banged down and the duck jumped half a mile into the air and disappeared into the shrubbery.

Half an hour of expensive filming time was spent combing every nook and cranny in a fruitless search. Duck number two was produced. He (or possibly she) turned out to be a natural, performing perfectly and showing a rather surprising appreciation of the New Testament. The sequence was in the can.

My only knowledge of follies when I began researching this film was that, as a child brought up in the New Forest, I could see the top of Peterson's Folly from miles around, knowing very little of it's history. Little did I know that one day I would climb those 365 steps to the top, not once, but three times in an afternoon.

Although the film is now complete, my search still goes on. I'm a truly converted folly addict.

Gerald and Ivy at Brightling Church, Sussex.
Photo: Christine Hall.

# Preserv'd in Aspic

## Gwyn Headley

"You must put your ruin at last into the hands of nature" William Gilpin

Follies excite strong emotions. They are buildings designed for pleasure, and for me they retain this extraordinary ability to please. I love them, always have done - to me no greater compliment can be paid to a building than to call it a folly - while some people despise them, hate and fear the thought that anything with which they are associated could be so described. Fortunately this is a dying attitude; before the war people who had inherited follies often stoutly denied they were follies at all (the denial is the one certain factor in deciding whether it actually is one) in the mistaken belief that a folly implied a deranged ancestor.

Not a bit of it. That particular ancestor was probably the one most at peace with himself. He may not have realised that what he was building was going to be a folly - although William Beckford, builder of Fonthill Abbey, the greatest folly of them all, was fully aware of what he was doing - but he always knew he was building for pleasure before purpose.

Many eighteenth century folly builders simply followed fashion. As a result some of their garden buildings now look a little half-hearted, even with the veneration of 200 years. The really big follies such as Horton Tower and Bladon Castle transcended style, dominating their surroundings in a way that no building would be allowed to today. They were built complete, or at least designed to give an impression of completeness - Bladon's massive facade stretches over 600 feet - but the major new concept the eighteenth century handed down to we folly hunters was the artificial ruin, the recreation of Piranesian landscape. The earliest example to survive is Alfred's Hall in the park at Cirencester, dating from 1721; after a slow start, the fashion spread across the country. A ruined arch connected to a circular tower made a particularly fine addition to the landscape. The most famous ones are at Mow Cop in Cheshire, Bradgate Park in Leicestershire, and above Harden Bank in West Yorkshire. The last one, St David's Ruin, is a classic example of the problem that faces folly lovers today - preservation or dereliction?

St. David's Ruin was tidied up in the 1950's when the artfully damaged tower, which left one Gothick window-frame intact though surrounded by crumbline masonry, was truncated into a neat cylinder with a band delineating the start of the second storey. It now looks almost muncipal. There is no doubt that part of the pleasure to be found in a folly is its air of neglect, its forlorn mystery. The folly one reaches after being shredded by brambles and threatened by excitingly unsafe blocks of stone is truer to its original conception than the folly neatly set in a well-tended environment with the official excuses for its construction carefully set out by the owner/builder/caretaker. It's far more pleasurable, as well.

Nevertheless there are good and sensible reasons for the latter approach. Although sanitised, the folly will be preserved, protected and cared for; its decay is arrested. The owner of the structure is less likely to be sued out of existence by the next-of-kin of the recipient of a rapidly descending parapet. People can have safe access in return for sacrificing mystery, danger, excitement, romanticism, wonder.

It is obvious where my sympathies lie, yet I am naturally more concerned than most that our existing follies should be preserved in whatever way possible. If the only way is to restore all the magic out of them, then so be it - in another hundred years the committee that restored it will be forgotten, the creeper will have returned, and a future generation will stumble across the pleasure of ruins.

In our book Follies, Wim Meulenkamp and I have identified 1,250 folly sites in Great Britain. Many of the follies are beyond salvation. Some are being built as I write - Vernon Gibberd's grotto at Leeds Castle is unquestionably the finest this century. Others have been saved so carefully that they look brand new; the sham ruined abbey at Painshill now looks as if it was built in 1987 rather than the 1760s. I cannot help feeling that if it was built to look like a ruin, then it should continue to look like a ruin. If a sham ruin becomes itself ruinous, the decay must be arrested, but it should not necessarily be refurbished and polished up.

The problem was recognised in the eighteenth century. At the beginning of this article I quoted William Gilpin, who wrote in his Observations Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty Made in the Year 1772:

> "A paltry ruin is of no value. A grand one is a work of magnificence. A garden-temple, or a Palladian bridge, may easily be affected; but such a portion of ruin, as will give any idea of a castle, or an abbey, that is worth displaying, requires an expense equal to that of the mansion you inhabit. There is great art, and difficulty also in executing a building of this kind. It is not every man who can build a house, that can execute a ruin. To give the stone it's mouldering appearance - to make the widening chink run naturally through all the joints - to mutilate the ornaments - to peel the facing from the internal structure - to show how correspondent parts have once united; though now the chasm runs wide between them - and to scatter heaps of ruin around with negligence and ease; are great efforts of art; much too delicate for the hand of a common workman; and what we very rarely see performed.
>
> Besides, after all, that art can bestow, you must put your ruin at last into the hands of nature to adorn, and perfect it. If the mosses, and lychens grow unkindly on your walls - if the streaming weather-stains have produced no variety of tints - if the ivy refuses to mantle over your buttress; or to creep among the ornaments of your Gothic window - if the ash cannot be bought to hand from the cleft; or long, spiry grass to wave over the shattered battlement - your ruin will be still incomplete - you may as well write over the gate, Built in the year 1772. Deception there can be none."

Now the folly fashion has gone, although there are faint stirrings of its revival in the small scale Coade stone successors advertised in country magazines. In our more egalitarian age, there is not the vast disparity of wealth that enabled the eighteenth century folly builder to disport himself in stone oblivious to social concerns or political pressure. But obsessive builders will continue, no matter what. May the ivy mantle over their buttresses for many years to come.

# Ashton Restoration

## Andrew Plumridge

The recently restored Ashton Memorial, described by Pevsner as 'the grandest monument in England', now forms a centrepiece in Lancaster's Williamson Park, currently being developed as a Victorian/Edwardian theme park.

Commissioned by the linoleum millionaire and politician, Lord Ashton, and designed by John Belcher and J J Joass, the monument was built using advanced composite building techniques - concrete and steel as well as a loadbearing brick structure. It was completed in 1909.

The work, carried out by Shepherd Construction for Lancaster City Council, included structural reinforcement of the two internal domes; removal of decayed steel and concrete; replacement of dangerous and loose masonry in balustrades and beams; replacement windows; the renewal of external staircase, terraces and balustrades; general fabric repairs; and the replacement of inadequate building services.

The restoration was possible following the launch of a successful appeal by the trustees of the grade I listed memorial, to raise the £600,000 needed to restore the structure back to its original condition.

*Official Newsletter Circulation ~ 782 copies*

# Radnor Gardens Restoration

## Plans Revealed to Save the Summerhouse

### Patricia Schooling

There is at last some hope that the Gothic summerhouse in Radnor Gardens, on Twickenham riverside, may be restored back to its original style.

Over recent years this unique and architecturally interesting small building has fallen into disrepair and has been vandalised.

Plans for its restoration have now been put to Richmond Council by the Environment Trust for Richmond upon Thames as part of a larger scheme to redesign the immediate surrounding area, which also includes a mid-18th Century gazebo, so as to become an attractive site for community events.

The concept, drawn up by Trust member Brian Smith, consulting architect, has attracted the attention and support of the Strawberry Hill Residents Association, the local Bowling Club which has its green and club house in the Gardens, and a number of the Borough's leading Councillors.

Both Heritage of London and English Heritage have promised funds to assist with the building restoration work, but substantial funding and work is also needed from Richmond Council itself before the Environment Trust can make the final decision to proceed. It will not be until mid-March that the Council's committment is known and ratified.

The Radnor Gardens summerhouse, built c.1750, has been a Grade II listed building since 1983 and is the only remaining building associated with Radnor House, named after the 4th Earl of Radnor in the early 18th Century and destroyed by bombing in World War II.

The summerhouse is made of timber, of polygonal shape. There are trefoiled ogeed apertures and wide windows set behind. The hexagonal pattern to the glazing bars is another feature of interest.

The Environment Trust schemes involves clearing away much of the overgrown foliage which obscures it so that, when restored, the summerhouse may become the focal point of interest in the gardens.

ENVIRONMENT TRUST FOR RICHMOND UPON THAMES
51 Sheen Road
Richmond upon Thames
Surrey TW9 1YQ.

# Pergolas Arbours Gazebos Follies

### Gwyn Headley


It's happening - slowly, but it's happening. Follies are emerging from the undergrowth. Instead of being embarrassed by some ancestor's peccadillo, folly owners are now brushing down the stony evidence of forgotten indiscretions and, in cases where money is freely available, refurbishing them. My article Preserv'd In Aspic elsewhere in this issue argues against over-enthusiastic restoration, from the point of view of one who is not yet the proud but responsible owner of a folly. For people in this condition, the obvious answer is to build their own.

In the eighteenth century there was a multitude of pattern books to guide the would-be folly builder. Not so nowadays, but help is at hand. The landscape gardener David Stevens has recently published Pergolas Arbours Gazebos Follies*, a practical manual on modern garden buildings, here described as 'features'. The book is directed at owners of small gardens, so if you're looking for designs for a tower to cap the crag to be seen from the east wing, look elsewhere. Stevens has planned for density; one proposed layout gives a pergola, an arbour, a gazebo and a folly in a garden 110ft by 30ft!

Without going into tedious construction details, Stevens outlines a brief history of each 'feature' shows what role it can play in a modern garden and suggests suitable plants to enhance it. The actual construction is left to one's own imagination, although Nils Solberg's wonderfully detailed pencil drawings are helpful in clarifying building methods. This is a gardening book first and foremost, but the excellently reproduced colour photographs make it a coffee table candidate.

What particular interest does the book have for folly enthusiasts? Limited, I'm afraid, for those questing after new knowledge, although there are some good photographs of John Last's beautiful follies at Corpusty in Norfolk on pages 11, 114 and 115, which we discovered too late to include in Follies. I give the page numbers because a few of the pictures have any indication as to where they are; mildly frustrating but nowhere near as bad as in our book!

Although Follies isn't credited it's nice to see the author has read it - certain phrases have a very comforting and familiar ring, and he has followed our well trodden paths to several follies, including the underwater ballroom at Witley Park which is all but impossible to visit. Never mind - if he's proselytising for follies I'm all for it.

His garden designs are attractive, particularly the use of water, which he unfortunately doesn't elaborate on. I was warned long ago that there were three motorways to bankruptcy - wine, women and water in gardens, and I'd like to know more. But if you're a keen gardener with an interest in follies and a certain degree of competence in construction, this book's worth looking at. There's nothing else like it on the market.

*Pergolas Arbours Gazebos Follies by David Stevens. Ward Lock, £12.95. 128pp, ISBN 0 7063 6555 0.

# A unique practice

S E L L · W A D E · P O S T I N S

## Andrew Plumridge

Camouflaged in one of Hampstead's Mews, the unusual practice of Sell, Wade and Postins was set up in 1981 after the three Directors had been awarded the A.A. Graduate Diploma in Building Conservation.

The practice is 'concerned about the loss of historic landscapes, sometimes by deliberate change, sometimes by neglect, but, more often by lack of knowledge and a clear idea of how they should be managed'. As a result they have formed a team of Architects, a Conservation Consultant, Historical Researcher, Sociologist, Economist, Archaelogist and Landscape Manager who 'provide a service for owners to help them survey, plan and manage their historic landscape'.

Having worked extensively at Chobham Hall, Kent, one of their current projects is the conversion of the Grade I listed *DARNLEY MAUSOLEUM* into a country house. The mausoleum was originally designed by James Wyatt in 1783, and the ambitious conversion, which should help prevent further vandalism, was granted planning permission after a 4-day public enquiry.



# New beginning for Perrott's Folly

## Andrew Plumridge

An exciting restoration project of the Grade II* Perrott's Folly is currently being undertaken by the Perrott's Folly Company, and is scheduled for completion in 1989.

Built in 1758 by John Perrott, the folly is correctly hailed as 'Birmingham's most eccentric building'. Its remarkable survival in Birmingham's fast changing face is chiefly due to its former owners - the Birmingham and Midlands Institute - who sold the folly to the Company in 1984 and permitted the cost (£17,500) to be spread over 6 years, at a rate of interest 2% below base rate.

The aim of the Perrott's Folly Company is 'audaciously simple: to make use of this eighteenth century building for the community in a way never before intended or achieved'.

In late 1984 Remo Granelli was appointed as architect, with a brief to oversee the repair and restoration and to advise the Company about adaption and new uses. Following a heart illness in late 1986, he was forced to retire from his architectural activities and the local practice of Kelly and Surman were asked to oversee the remaining work.

The project has captured local attention and is already used in publicity material for the City of Birmingham. As a tourist attraction and educational facility for local schools and colleges, it contains many features for a worthwhile visit - a historic building with a unique and eccentric legend, many interesting architectural and historical features and local history exhibitions. The building, which was the inspiration for Tolkein's 'The Two Towers', is also part of an Urban Wildlife Trail and has good views of Birmingham from its turreted roof-top.

Restoration works are being carried out by William Jackson (Langley Green) Limited at a cost of £35,340 + VAT and has only been possible through the hard work of the Company and the generous assistance of the Birmingham and Midlands Institute.

Grants were received from the City of Birmingham (£14,400), West Midlands County Council (£10,000), I.C.P. (£7,000), Historic Monuments Commission (£5,313), The Pilgrims Trust (£4,000), Lazard Brothers & Co. (£2,500), Chase Charity (£2,000) and small gifts from various charitable trusts (£4,785). Cornerstone, which managed the project before the formation of The Perrott's Folly Company, raised £12,569.

The Company can be contacted through its Chairman - The Rev. Christopher Walton, The Perrott's Folly Company, Waterworks Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B16 9AL.