



This month's bulletin arrives just ahead of the annual garden party so provides a timely reminder to book your ticket before they sell out. It also includes fuller details (forgive the pun) of the Brightling trip in September, the Edinburgh tour in October, and the visit to Croome Park on 4 November. And if that is not enough, there is the usual potpourri of news and gossip from the world of follies.

Over the past year we have focussed on ways of using the internet to benefit members and help us administer the charity. The e-bulletin is one example of this, but its success is nothing in comparison with the changes made to the website for which we are greatly indebted to Alan Terrill. For example, you can take out membership by downloading an application form; see a full list of events for the year ahead; check out a list of books that are available on this and related subjects; contact officers by e-mail; and pose questions and show off your knowledge with answers in the Folly Forum. The most recent change is that you can now read back editions of the bulletin by following the appropriate link under the publications banner.

The trustees are greatly impressed by the success of the website and want to make more of it. With this in mind they are looking at posting the Minutes of their meetings on the website, and those from the AGM including the Annual Report and Accounts; and making it easy for you to pay your subscription using PayPal and other internet payment systems. All of this is currently being investigated and undergoing a trial period, but keep an eye on developments by visiting the website on a regular basis.

Lastly, you are reminded that subscriptions were due on 1 June, so if you usually pay by cheque and haven't yet done so, please send it to Rat Riches at 61 Park Road, Lancaster LA1 3EJ. Please note that the rates have been increased for the first time since 1999 and are now £25 for individuals and £30 for joint (husband and wife etc) members. If you can, why not change to a standing order and complete a gift aid form because this helps to reduce our administration costs and gives us the advantage of the extra tax.

Andrew Plumridge
andrew@follies.fsnet.co.uk

Ruined Abingdon

The impact of disastrous 1970s town planning means there is little to recommend a visit to Abingdon these days. Once a treasure of north Berkshire, it was unceremoniously pushed into Oxfordshire in 1974 in one of those boundary changes that is unpopular with everyone except political gerrymanderers and is now completely overshadowed by its neighbour Morseville, née Oxford. But thanks to a restoration project costing more than £1-million, one reason to stop by is to see its recreation grounds restored to their Victorian splendour.

The Abbey Grounds restoration (behind the council offices in the centre of Abingdon) took five years to complete and was funded by grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Vale of White Horse District Council. It is designated as an Ancient Monument because the seventh-century Abingdon Abbey once stood here, although the current ruins were created by E. J. Trendell in the 1860s as part of a scheme to develop a range of formal gardens that included ornamental water features and the Folly ruins.



The council is planning a series of display boards to explain the history of the site, and is appealing for old photographs to help them in that task. One of those boards is bound to show that during the clearing of the lake workers found it was full of World War II guns, rockets, anti-tank mines, grenades, practice bombs and magazines of ammunition, all of which was destroyed by a series of controlled explosions by the British Army.

Founding Flounders

When the Fellowship pulled out of talks to take over ownership of Flounders Folly and organise its repair, the tower's future looked uncertain. A short time after, however, a small group of local people took up the mantle and set up the Flounders Folly Trust. After gaining listed building consent from South Shropshire District Council, the Trust went out to tender in April 2003 and commenced repair work a year later. It is now complete.



Built in 1838, Benjamin Flounders hoped his tower would provide a spectacular panorama over his nearby estate but it wasn't until the tower was finished that he realised an inconvenient hill stood in the way. In a rage Flounders is believed to have demanded that the tower be taken down and moved, but his Steward was keen to avoid what he saw as a further waste of money. Thinking fast he pointed out a shimmering stretch of water in the distance and told his employer it was the River Mersey and how useful it would be for Flounders to watch his ships entering harbour. It worked, and the tower stayed where it was.

The restoration project was helped by the discovery of the architect's original drawings in the North Yorkshire Record Office. You can read about this and more at www.floundersfolly.co.uk.

Jerk it up in Jamaica!

If you are in Jamaica this month and fancy taking part in the Portland Jerk Festival, you will also have an opportunity to enjoy a building that the islanders call the 'Folly Ruins.' What's a Jerk Festival? Well, it's not what you first think but a celebration of the island's culinary speciality jerk

pork, jerk chicken, jerk fish, jerk lobster, jerk sausage and even jerk conch, all served with breadfruit, yam and rice and peas.



The mansion was built in 1905 by American millionaire Alfred Mitchell and was intended to impress his wife Anne – the Tiffany heiress – and convince her that she should move permanently to Jamaica with him. However, instead of using fresh water to mix the concrete the builders used sea water instead, causing the concrete to effervesce and start to deteriorate. By the time Mrs Mitchell arrived on the island her dream palace was already crumbling and she was said to be deeply upset. 'What folly', she cried shortly before going back to America, never to return and leaving the house empty to deteriorate further.

As usual the truth is somewhat less colourful than the myth. The house was designed to look like a grand Roman villa with 60 rooms spread over two storeys, and fitted with all mod-cons. It had its own wind-powered generator to pump sea water to an indoor swimming pool, its own power station and a private water reservoir. Its grounds were also stocked with a variety of exotic animals like peacocks and monkeys. When Mitchell died in 1911 his wife remained at the mansion until the outbreak of World War I when she returned to America and left the house to mercy of the elements and local vandals.

The Jerk Festival runs from 07-28 July. The house (which is not a true folly) stands on the outskirts of Port Antonio, on route A4 heading east towards Trident Village and overlooking the sea.

Folly of the Month: Court's Folly, Dover, Kent

Hidden away on the cliffs of the Western Heights in Dover is a folly that has been hidden for years and is so little known that it was even missed from H+M's *Follies*. Now a posting on You Tube (<http://youtube.com/user/jorolat>) means it can be seen by everyone, and from the comfort of your chair!



Court's Folly was built in the early 1800s by the wine merchants Stephen and Rogers Court, who were based at 140 Snargate Street. Their original intention seems to have been the building of a summerhouse in which to entertain guests and themselves, but from day one it became a tourist attraction. It measures approximately 11 x 20ft, and stands 20ft tall on a steep part of the cliff-face. With the closing of the business in the 1870s, the miniature castle was left to fall into ruins and be engulfed by trees and undergrowth, making access on this steep section of cliff-face even more difficult.

The front elevation is largely intact together with part of the west wall. The east face contained the entrance door but has crumbled away.

At the moment the only images of the folly have been taken by John Latter and can be seen on www.panoramio.com/user/250345/tags/Folly. If access can be obtained, a full history of the folly and its builders will be prepared for publication in either the magazine or journal.

Rotterdam Folly Expo

If you are in The Netherlands this summer, be sure to visit an exhibition of designs for new follies that have been built as part of the City of Architecture 2007 in Rotterdam.

Follydock IFCR (International Folly Contest Rotterdam) was a design competition for artists, designers and architects who were invited to create an original folly for the Rotterdam harbour area and to stretch the boundaries of fantasy and reality. The plan was to build around 20-40 of the best designs, with the winners being built between January and May in and around Heijplaat, near the Port. Our Ambassadors in The Netherlands have had a sneak preview and been quite impressed by the results. They are also pleased that the event has kept follies in the headlines of the Dutch press. Our sister organisation in The Netherlands – the DonderbergGroep – is also planning a visit.

Follydock Expo is open from 26 May to 9 September. See www.follydock.com for details.

Excursion News: Brightling and the follies of 'Mad' Jack Fuller

On Saturday 8 September we are celebrating the 250th anniversary of the birth of John 'Mad Jack' Fuller with a walking tour around the unique group of follies created at his Brightling estate in East Sussex. Our tour begins at his pyramid mausoleum where we will raise a glass of Port in memory of the great man. From there we will walk to the tower, the rotunda, Coade Stone seat, sugar loaf, obelisk and more. To join us you will need to be able to walk a distance of about 2-miles, including a couple of gentle hills, but if this is a problem for you it is possible to drive to points close to some of the follies and meet us at various places en-route. We will begin at Brightling Church at 11am, but try to arrive a bit earlier to see the interior of this charming parish church. You will also need a pair of sturdy shoes and something in case it rains, as well as a sandwich and a bottle of water so we can picnic along the way.



At the end of the walk we will drive to nearby Bodiam Castle for tea at the National Trust shop. Tickets are £6 each for members and £8 for their guests: the cost includes tea, scones and jam, but not entrance to the castle itself.

If you are members of the National Trust please bring your membership card with you to gain free entry to Bodiam Castle.

Competition – win a bottle of Beaujolais

It seems that you were stumped by last month's picture competition because nobody e-mailed me with the right answer. In fact it was the pyramid that stands on Killiney Hill in Dublin. It gives a panorama of unparalleled beauty, looking out over Killiney Bay and an area dubbed as the Irish Beverley Hills, where the likes of Bono, Neil Jordan and Michael Schumacher all have impressive houses.



This month's competition asks you to identify the English folly part-pictured below. Again there is a bottle of my fast depleting stock of Beaujolais to the first person to e-mail the correct answer to andrew@follies.fsnet.co.uk.



Forthcoming Events

Saturday, 18 August – The Annual Garden Party at Pelham Place, Newton Valence (near Alton) in Hampshire. It is an exciting new folly garden with more work by Vernon Gibberd and Derek Bruce, including an underground 'canal' grotto by the lake. Details from follywaters@onetel.com

Saturday, 08 September – A tour of Mad Jack Fuller's follies at Brightling, East Sussex, which had to be postponed from earlier this year. Details available from andrew@follies.fsnet.co.uk

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.

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

