



Dusk over Kimmeridge Bay, photo: timbobee (Flickr)

## Clavell Tower Lives Again



**A**fter half a century of teetering on the edge of a collapsing shale escarpment and at risk of falling into the English Channel, Clavell Tower at Kimmeridge Bay (Dorset) has finally been rescued thanks to the Landmark Trust and a grant of £436,700 from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The tower stands on the Smedmore Estate, which has been owned by the same family since 1391. It was then that Henry Smedmore sold it to his tenant William Wyot, whose daughter married John Clavell in the 1440s. In 1554, John's great-great-grandson (also John) enlarged the estate by

buying the manor of Kimmeridge from the Abbot of Cerne, and appears to have quietly focused on the business of farming it. His son, William (1568-1664) was the opposite and is best known as the soldier who put down an Irish rebellion for James I, earning him the title of knight banneret. Back at Kimmeridge he started a salt works, and later an alum works which should have been profitable given that alum was in high demand at the time as a *mordant* for fixing coloured dyes to textiles. With most of it supplied through the Papal States north of Rome, where it was often disrupted, William's enterprise gave the industry a guaranteed local source. However, his lack of business acumen saw him generate a massive loss of £20,000, forcing him to sell and mortgage the greater part of his estate, although he retained Smedmore, Orchard and Kimmeridge in order "to keep the same in his name and blood."

Further disgrace befell the family when Sir William's nephew, John Clavell (1601-1643), took to crime and became a notorious highwayman in the Rochester area of Kent. Eventually captured, imprisoned and sentenced to death in 1626, he was pardoned two years later by the Queen and spent the rest of his days as a quack doctor and an author, writing the play *The Soddered Citizen*.

When Sir William's grandson, George, died without an heir the estate passed to his nephew William on condition that he changed his name to Clavell. The same condition was applied to his brother John when he inherited the estate in 1818 on William's death, and it is he who built the folly.

John (Richards) Clavell had spent his life as the Rector of Church Knowle and Steeple and was around 60 when he inherited the estate. By all accounts he lived a quiet and reclusive life, but marked the occasion by building the four-storey drum-shaped observatory on the edge of the Bay so he could enjoy watching the stars at night and ships in the English Channel during the day. When

it opened in 1820, the tower attracted much local attention with one writer in the *Dorset County Chronicle* claiming that it could be seen from the esplanade in Weymouth. Others nicknamed it *The Tower of the Winds*, although the inclusion of an open fireplace on every floor must have made it reasonably cosy place. John Clavell died intestate, but a Will was discovered that appeared to pass the estate to his steward and housekeeper. Two years later it was proved to be a forgery, and the two servants were hanged for their deception.

By the end of the nineteenth century the tower was in use as a watchtower by the coast-guard, but at some time between the First and Second World Wars it had been set alight and gutted by fire. The burned-out ruin was left as it was, and was further threatened by the sea undermining the shale cliff face, leaving it standing precariously on the edge of a 20-metre drop.



This constant threat of collapse added to the tower's notoriety, and it became almost as popular as a landmark to walkers as it was for sailors in the English Channel. In 1860 it caught the imagination of Thomas Hardy, who was at that time engaged to Eliza Nicholls. Her father was one of the coastguards at Kimmeridge and lived in a small cottage nearby. To demonstrate his love for Eliza, he wrote the poem *She to Him*, and illustrated it with a sketch of them walking hand-in-hand on the path to the tower. Later, it appeared on one of the Shell Oil Company's travel posters and was painted by the war artist Paul Nash (see *Follies Journal* 5: Winter 2005). It also provided the backdrop for a TV drama based on the P D James's novel *The Black Tower*, filmed there in 1985.



The grade II listed folly forms an important feature in Kimmeridge Bay, which is designated as a World Heritage Site. In 1999 Andrew Plumridge was asked to put forward ideas to save the folly from collapse. His advice was to do exactly what has now been done, although curiously there were strong objections from English Heritage who wanted it fall into the sea "so that Mother Nature could reclaim her materials." This bizarre reaction was made all the more curious given that EH was at that time celebrating the technical achievement of moving of the Belle Tout lighthouse away from the edge of Beachy Head. Despite this the case for saving the tower was a compelling one, and Landmark Trust eventually received listed building consent to dismantle the folly and re-erect it 25-metres away from the cliff edge. Their project took 18 months to complete, at a cost of £898,000.



Three cheers for the Landmark Trust and all those who were involved in saving this spectacular folly from loss.





## Precarious Follies

**G**iven the spectacular view they afford, it is no wonder that people want to build follies on cliff edges and isolated rocky outcrops. Unlike Clavell, most patrons had the good sense to set their buildings on firm foundations capable of withstanding all that Mother Nature throws at them.

An earlier cliff-edge triumph achieved by the Landmark Trust was its rescue of the **Banqueting House at Hackfall Woods**, near Grewelthorpe in North Yorkshire, a project that took 15 years just to acquire the building thanks to the large number of interests existing on the site. Perched dramatically above the steeply wooded gorge that makes up the poetic (if usually damp) woodland garden built by William Aislabie in the mid-1700s, the folly now provides holiday accommodation for two people.



The folly has two faces: a 'polite' Gothic one on the public side, and a rugged sham ruin on the other. Between them are three rooms decorated in period style, including a sitting room flanked by a bedroom and a bathroom, and outside (at the rear) a private terrace with views across the gorge. In this instance the project was funded with help from English Heritage as well as the Hackfall Trust, the Normanby Charitable Trust, Monument Trust and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.



Also at Hackfall is **Mowbray Castle**, a sham ruin that was built around 1750 by William Aislabie and named after the medieval de Mowbray family who lived nearby. Great care was taken to provide the illusion of a genuine ruined castle, making it a wholly convincing ruse.



One of the earliest cliff-edge follies was the **Mussenden Temple**, built in 1783-5 by Frederick Augustus Hervey, the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry, who picked a wild stretch of the Londonderry coast near Castlerock as the site for his new mansion (now ruined), facing the Atlantic Ocean. The temple is dedicated to the memory of Hervey's cousin, Frideswide Bruce, later Mrs Mussenden, who was said to have been especially beautiful. Rumours of a relationship between the girl and the 52-year-old Bishop caused a scandal at the time, although it is now thought that nothing improper took place. When she died aged 22, Hervey was clearly heartbroken, and wrote: "I intend to build a Grecian temple in Frideswide's honour...I intend to build it on the edge of a cliff. It will give employment to the poor of the district, and employment, as you know, is one of my cures for Ireland's ills..."



Hervey had a particular interest in circular buildings, having used circles and ellipses as the basis for a kennel, a cenotaph to the memory of his brother, and two of his earlier houses. His notes on the building state that it was based on Bramante's Tempietto on Mount Gianicolo, which was itself based on the temples of Vesta at Tivoli and Rome. The building was probably the work of the Cork architect Michael Shanahan, who accompanied the Lord-Bishop on one of his many visits to Italy. As if to reinforce its precarious position an inscription



from Lucretius was added, saying *'Tis pleasant, safely to behold from shore the rolling ship, and hear the tempest roar.'*



The temple was always intended to provide the Bishop with a library, but controversially for an Anglican Bishop, he added a crypt and wrote: "A luminous idea has struck me. I might provide a stipend of £10 per year for a priest, and my Roman Catholic workmen could worship in the crypt." It was a forward-thinking idea, but one that squared with the Bishop's widely-known encouragement of Catholic emancipation.

Forming part of the Downhill Estate, the folly is now owned by the National Trust. With the cliff face showing signs of erosion, the Trust undertook a cliff stabilisation project in 1997 to prevent any further threat to one of Ireland's most spectacularly located temples.

A different type of escape was sought by the Cornish bon-viveur Samuel Symons who is said to have had a passion for a good time and was of the opinion that this could be achieved by drinking, gambling and partying. In pursuit of this he is said to have built **Doyden Castle** in 1830 on the edge of Lundy Bay near Port Quin. Although small in size the folly was given a large cellar for wine and gin, a kitchen and recreation room (now divided to form a sitting



room and a dining room), together with a bedroom at first floor level. H & M *Follies* tells us, however, that this was a later use for the folly, which was actually built by Symons to commemorate the tragic sinking of the Port Quin boat on which every man from the village was said to have been aboard and drowned.

The castle is now a National Trust Cottage ([www.nationaltrustcottages.co.uk](http://www.nationaltrustcottages.co.uk)) and has space to sleep two. It will be remembered by many as one of the locations used in the 1970s BBC drama *Poldark*, based on the novel by Winston Graham.



When it comes to building close to the edge, few can match the achievements of Sir Rowland Hill (1705-83) and his son Sir Richard (1733-1808) who together created a picturesque landscape on the red sandstone cliffs at **Hawkstone Park**, Shropshire. It is a little hard to imagine now what it must have been like when first created, because restoration and the demands of a health and safety audit have sanitised the place and taken away the thrill that would have been intended. Despite this, Barbara Jones's earlier description of it remains true: 'the park has neither the abandoned solitude nor the municipal over-population necessitating railings, notices and asphalt paths that make...the atmosphere of most parks today.'





Almost all of the follies were constructed by 1787 when a watercolour record of the Park was made. Then, as now, the long walk terminates at a grotto perched high above the surrounding flat lands of Shropshire, and called The Labyrinth because of its vast size. Above its entrance is a sham ruin arch in red sandstone that Barbara Jones tells us was once crowned with 'a weathered, sinister carving of a winged sphinx.' In her description of the original Park she tells us that there was also a lion's den, Watch Tower, arcaded Peacock House, Gothick Boathouse, moss temple, heather hermitage and Neptune's Whim that was 'built at the foot of a windmill to look like Holland,' and a menagerie. All but the hermitage have now gone, but the park still offers enough to provide an impression of how exciting it must have been when it was first opened.



Among the follies that exist there today are a 34-metre high Tuscan column topped with the figure of Sir Rowland Hill (built 1795), the Red Castle and White Tower (see page 4). What makes Hawkstone different, however, is its intention to make the visitor feel that he is walking on the edge of a precipice, something that it achieves by setting footpaths surprisingly close to the edge of cliffs and ravines. The sensation is reinforced by the addition of a narrow Alpine Bridge set over a deep gorge and seemingly made from branches that have been nailed together.



Given its extraordinary character, it is no wonder that the site was chosen by the BBC as the

setting for Narnia in its adaptation of C S Lewis's books.

On the Isle of Man, **Milner Tower** was built by the people of Port Erin to honour the Liverpool safe-maker William Milner in thanks for his generous benefaction to the town. In 1871, in what was to have been a surprise, they built a tower for him on a site at Bradda Head, and built it in the shape of a lock. When Milner discovered the secret he is said to have donated much of the money that was needed for its construction cost.



Standing closer to the sea on a somewhat lower outcrop than Milner's Tower is the remains of Lady Janet Anstruther's bathhouse near to the Scottish village of Elie (Fife). Built around 1740-50, and known locally as **The Lady's Tower**, the small folly provided a spectacular place in which Lady Anstruther could bathe unobserved. Any Peeping Toms who hoped to catch a glimpse of the event were ushered away by a servant standing guard and ringing handbells. The building is attributed to William Adam who is known to have worked at Elie House for the Anstruthers, and who helped to popularise the Gothick style in Scotland.



In Devon, the squat two-storey castellated **Duty Point Tower** stands on a cliff edge at Lynton, and was built in 1850 as a gazebo to Lee Abbey. It is less well-known than the **Mount Edgecumbe** ruin (Cornwall) built in 1747 by Timothy Brett and

overlooking Plymouth Sound. It was designed to replace a navigational obelisk that originally stood on the same site and as a use for stone that had been taken from the medieval church of St George and St Lawrence at Stonehouse.



Finally, it is impossible to exclude **Mow Cop** (Cheshire) from any feature on follies that are built on a rocky edge. Originally known as Mole Cop, it was built in 1754 as a summerhouse and eye-catcher for Randle Wilbraham I of Rode Hall, located some 3 miles away. He employed the local stonemasons John and Ralph Harding to build the ruin and paid them one shilling a day for their toil, despite one of them losing a hand in an accident cutting stone. Once completed, the Wilbrahams and their guests used to ride out to the folly during good weather for picnics and enjoy the amazing view that can be had from there on a clear day.

In 1850 an argument began when Ralph Sneyd of Keele Hall claimed that since part of the building stood on his land, part of it should belong to him. The dispute arose at a time when Randle Wilbraham was busy restoring the summerhouse so it could be used again, and meant his workmen trespassing on Sneyd's land. In the court case that followed, Mr Justice Patteson heard evidence of how the Wilbraham family had abandoned the building at the start of the nineteenth century when they moved to Lancashire, although Wilbraham claimed that it was maintained as an ornamental ruin by his steward Gordon Reece. The court also heard from Reece, who stated that the door had been replaced and walls repaired in 1824 at a cost of £4.4s, and that further work took place in 1841. However, it was not until the family returned to Rode Hall that a full restoration was possible, at a cost of £34.



The court's final ruling was that the building cut through the boundary of both estates and so belonged to both men. As a result, the cost of its upkeep should also be shared between the two estates. Importantly, Mr Justice Patteson also ruled that the public should continue to have free access to the building except during divine service on Sundays when the building should remain locked.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the folly had again fallen into a state of disrepair, with the windows and doors rotting and the surrounding turf (once described as "*Soft as velvet to the feet*") being washed away.

In 1923 a second legal battle began when Joe Lovatt bought the folly and surrounding lands for the purpose of quarrying stone. Local people argued that the earlier court ruling gave them a right of access to the folly and that the land should never have been sold. Lovatt offered to donate the castle and half an acre of land for public use if the public paid for the necessary repairs, but the offer was refused. While Lovatt started mining rock from the site, a Mow Cop Preservation Committee was established to argue the people's case. On 23 September 1923, a group of 500 protestors and 50 committee members marched on the quarry and pulled down stone walls and wire fences, and even overturned a stone crusher.

Over time the protests quietened and it was left with solicitors to sort out the dispute. In the end the deeds of the folly and surrounding lands were given to the National Trust in June 1937, bringing the dispute to a close. The Trust undertook further repairs in 2002, reinforcing the folly's foundations and repointing the brick walls.





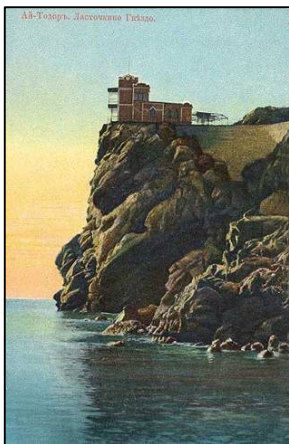
## Folly of the Month: Swallows Nest Castle, Yalta, Ukraine



**B**y far the most spectacular and one of the most popular of all the tourist attractions in southern Ukraine is the Swallows Nest Castle on the shores of the Black Sea, near Yalta. It was built in 1912 by the Russian architect Leonid Sherwood, and designed to give the appearance of being perched precariously on the edge of the Aurora Cliff.

The castle is the second building to stand on this site. The first was a timber-framed and timber-clad cottage built for a Russian General in 1895 and quickly nicknamed 'Love Castle' because of its romantic setting. It was pictured on an early hand-tinted postcard (right) and follows a similar profile to the present building.

At some time around the turn of the century the house was bought by A K Tobin, one of the Court Doctors to the Russian Tsar, who in turn sold it in 1911. The new owner was the German Baron von Steinheil, who earned his fortune extracting oil in the Baku region of Azerbaijan. He soon appointed Sherwood to take down the existing structure and design for him a more luxurious home, which he created using a style of architecture introduced to the Crimea by Edward Blore in the 1820s, mixing Neo-Moorish



with Scottish baronialism. Inspiration for the castle appears to have been taken from the sixteenth-century Belém Tower at Lisbon (below), although similarities have been drawn to Rhineland castles like Stolzenfels, and the Bavarian play castles of King Ludwig at Neuschwanstein and Babelsberg. The original plan was to create an entrance hall, off which were located a range of living rooms, and with two bedrooms located at different levels within the tower. There was also a separate guest suite.



The Baron's tenure was a short one, and in 1914 he sold the castle to P G Shelaputin who wanted to convert it to a restaurant. From there it had a mixed use as a tourist attraction and later as a reading club for the nearby Pearl resort during the 1930s.

In 1927 the area experienced a major earthquake which caused only superficial damage to the castle but a major fracture in the cliff itself. It forced the castle to close to the public and to remain that way for the next forty years. Restoration work eventually began in 1968 and involved the creation of a concrete plate to first stabilise the cliff, after which it was possible to commence repairs on the castle itself. By 1975 the building was open again and operating as an Italian restaurant, just as Shelaputin had wished nearly sixty years before.



Given its picturesque character and setting, it is not surprising that the building has attracted its fair share of attention from film-makers. It was used in numerous Soviet films, the most notable of which was as the setting for *Desyat Negrityat*, the Soviet adaptation of Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None*. It has also appeared as the backdrop for part of one of Jackie Chan's films.

## Gobbets:

- The latest edition of the *Concrete Quarterly* magazine (Autumn 2008) includes a feature on a new pavilion designed by David Chipperfield and Anthony Gormley for the Kivik Art Centre in Osterlen, Sweden. It has also inadvertently reopened the debate on when do sculptures become follies?

The description of the structure is promising for those arguing the folly case. It starts in a dark area called *The Cave* (lower block) from which visitors take the concrete stairs to a first floor platform known as *The Stage*.



Being open and with no protecting handrail, it is supposed to evoke a feeling of standing on a cliff edge viewing the landscape below. From there, visitors can climb *The Tower* via a spiral staircase to a lofty eyrie some 18

metres above the ground and enjoy panoramic views towards the Baltic Sea.

If you want to make your own mind up about the structure, it is open until 28 September 2008.

## Forthcoming F/F Events:

**Saturday, 8 November 2008** – Visit to Hardwick Park, a fine example of the mid-eighteenth-century landscape garden, located close to the village of Sedgely in south-east Co. Durham.



The 40-acre park was created by John Burdon from 1750, and included temples, follies and grottoes set around a central 17-acre lake.

Many of these were designed by some of the best architects of the day, such as James Paine who is attributed with the design of the principal buildings and the park layout. In more recent times the park has been restored with the help of lottery funding, including the Gothic Ruin, the Serpentine Lake and



Bridge, and the sites of the Statue of Neptune and The Grotto. Among the highlights on this visit will be James Paine's Temple of Minerva (restored from almost total collapse) and the Gothic Ruin, both of which will be opened for us to see and climb the tower.



Further details from Karen Lynch at [lynch.k@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:lynch.k@tiscali.co.uk).

## Beckford Weekend

**Saturday 20 – Sunday 21 September**

This is a weekend wallowing in the work of William Beckford and understanding the genius of his architectural ideas. Saturday starts with an introduction to the man himself by Leo Vaughan-Williams and is followed by a tour of Fonthill Estate by Lord Margadale. This is an excellent opportunity to see the bridge, boat house, the lake and the grottoes. More information on Beckford will be provided over lunch (bring a picnic), followed by a visit to the Abbey and the site of the beacon.

Sunday begins with a guided tour of the Lansdown Tower, built by Beckford to overlook the City of Bath. The afternoon will be left free to explore Bath and all its treasures – retail or otherwise!

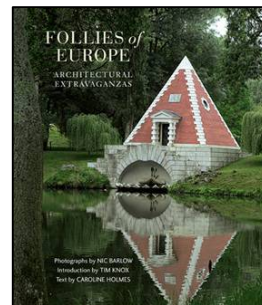
Details from Susanne Harding at The Old Stores, Noade Street, Ashmore, Dorset SP5 5AA (Tel: 01747 811364) or to [susanne.harding@ukf.net](mailto:susanne.harding@ukf.net).

Tickets:	Members	Saturday £13*	Sunday £5
	Non-members	Saturday £15*	Sunday £7

\* includes a bacon sandwich/pastry with morning coffee

## Other Events:

**02 August – 29 October 2008** – An exhibition of photographs of European Follies by Nic Barlow, at Petworth House, West Sussex. The exhibition will then move to Hove Museum and Art Gallery from 24 January to 3 May 2009.



Picture credits: *Clavell Tower* – the Justified Sinner (Flickr), Joe Dunkley and Boffin PC; *Banqueting House* – [www.Grewelthorpe.org.uk](http://www.Grewelthorpe.org.uk) and Landmark Trust; *Mowbray Castle* – Steve & Elise (Flickr); *Mussenden Temple* – [www.knittinguniverse.com](http://www.knittinguniverse.com) and Natan/Tourism Ireland; *Doyden Castle* – Gary Sheild and [www.freewebs.com](http://www.freewebs.com); *Hawkstone White Tower* and *Swiss Bridge* – Darren Curtis; *Milner's Folly* – Perreault (Flickr) and [www.photos.eagle-base.co.uk](http://www.photos.eagle-base.co.uk); *The Lady's Tower* – Jim Griffin; *Mount Edgecumbe* – Webrarian (Flickr); *Mow Cop* – (1) teun&el (Flickr) and (2) mackerpics (Flickr); *Swallows Nest Castle* – (1) [www.englishrussia.com](http://www.englishrussia.com) and (2) – babbahop (Flickr); *Kivik Centre Art* – Peter Guthrie; *Hardwick Park* (3) – William Anelay Ltd. Other pictures by the editor or from the Folly Picture Library: our grateful thanks to all for the use of their excellent pictures.