



## Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

### Issue 33:

December 2010

#### What we published in 2010:

A regularly updated website at [www.follies.org.uk](http://www.follies.org.uk)

#### Follies Magazine

- Issue 75 (Spring)—Banwell, Radcliffe Observatory, Packington Hayes, Sound Mirrors I, The Stamp House and Wye Valley and Dewstow.
- Issue 76 (Summer)—Sound Mirrors II, Mereworth, Volcanic Eruptions, Benedict's Folly, Follies of Redbridge, Poundbury, Jupiter Artland, Midford Castle and Triangular Towers.
- Issue 77 (Autumn)—Fantasias and Pleasure Gardens, West Country Wander, Around Anglesey, Blithfield Follies and Vaclav Levy (Czech Sculptor).

#### Follies Journal

- Issue 9: Follies in France I

#### Foll-e Bulletin

- Issue 27 (June)—Berkshire Follies
- Issue 28 (July)—Lost Follies
- Issue 29 (August)—Pyramidal Follies
- Issue 30 (September)—Heritage Open Days
- Issue 31 (October)—Britain's Favourite Follies
- Issue 32 (November)—Gothic Gardens

#### The Folly Fellowship

Articles, pictures, comments and feedback for the e-Bulletin should be sent to [andrew@follies.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:andrew@follies.fsnet.co.uk). All other correspondence should be sent to [membership@follies.org.uk](mailto:membership@follies.org.uk).



The Chrystal Shrine Grotto at 5668 Poplar Avenue in Memphis, Tennessee.  
Photo: Thomas R. Machnitzki (WikiMedia)

Anyone who has travelled in the United States will tell you that Americans define follies differently to Europeans, and often include what we regard as *curios*. The same is true of their grottoes, which almost always provide a stage set for religious icons. So, when the manager at my hotel in Memphis told me of a grotto in the city's Memorial Park Cemetery, I went to see but expected to be disappointed.

It turned out that the impressive 18-metre-deep **Chrystal Shrine Grotto** was hidden inside a building that resembled a banqueting house and lined with 5 tons of a pinky-orange coloured quartz. As if not to disappoint, it also had 12 biblical scenes from the life of Christ. In front of the grotto was a man-made pool and a fountain to complete the tranquil scene.

It was the work of the Mexican artist Dionicio Rodriguez, who is best known for sculpting concrete to look like timber, an art known as

*Faux Bois* (fake wood) and begins to explain why there is so much of it around the cemetery, including concrete bridges, seats and trees. So why here? Curiously, the owners of the cemetery were worried that their facility looked maudlin so in 1937 they invited Rodriguez to come and brighten up the place, a job that eventually took 10 years for him to complete.

The Thatched Umbrello at Elmwood Cemetery in Birmingham, Alabama  
Photo: T K Denizen



When it comes to follies with a religious connection, few are better placed than the gloriette in the gardens of Lambeth Palace, London. It is, however, a bit of a mystery with little known about its date of arrival or who built it.

A description of the gardens in 1647 suggests that there were other follies here, including a small tower which is described as 'a little house for a Gardner with three Roomes one over the other.' There was also 'a longe tarras Walke paved with square Tyles opening with arches to the West side of the said Garden over which is a faire leaden Walke with a Bankquetting house at the North East Corner thereof...' All of these have since disappeared.

The Lambeth Palace Gloriette, London  
Photo: [www.archbishopofcanterbury.org](http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org)



### Temporary Follies and Ice Cream Cones

The late David Hicks used to tell a story about how his local Planning Enforcement

Officer would rush around the lanes of South Oxfordshire looking for a pyramid that had been built without planning permission, but whenever he arrived at the spot stated by his 'snout', there was nothing to be seen. It turned out that the structure had been built by David on a railway trolley so he could wheel it to the site he wanted and move it somewhere else the next day. In doing so, he was taking advantage of planning rules which allow a landowner to do almost what he likes with his property for a maximum of 21 days per year.

In Cheshire, Chris Sadler and Mike Harper have been doing something similar for the past 11 years at Hurleston Farm, part of the Snugbury's Ice Cream empire, where Chris is a director. Each year, in a field beside the A51, the two men have been building follies and sculptures in straw and opening them up to raise money for the Railway Children Charity. This year's offering was a 12-metre-high Meerkat, but earlier achievements have included a windmill, the Lovell telescope at Jodrell Bank, and a smaller version of Antony Gormley's Angel of the North sculpture at Gateshead.



Last year, to mark the 150th anniversary of Big Ben, the pair built a smaller version of the clock tower at Westminster and had a range of ice cream cones made in the same shape. Any ideas for 2011?

Above and below: Some of the Snugbury Follies. Photos: [www.snugburys.co.uk](http://www.snugburys.co.uk)



### The Gates of Nepapatuam, Highlands, Scotland

It is commonly known that the **Fyrish Monument** at Evanton was built by General Sir Hector Munro of Novar in the 1780s using prize monies and pensions from his Indian campaigns. Like many of his generation, he built follies as a way of providing employment at a time of famine, even though his action in clearing lands in order to keep sheep was the cause of that famine and unemployment.

His folly on Fyrish Hill is said by some to have been built by Sir Hector to commemorate his own heroism in India, but there is no evidence to support this. It is nonetheless true that he based the design on the gates of the coastal fortress of Nepapatuam at Madras, which he captured from the Dutch on 12 November 1781. Less well known is the fact that the monument was originally painted white to help them stand out against the

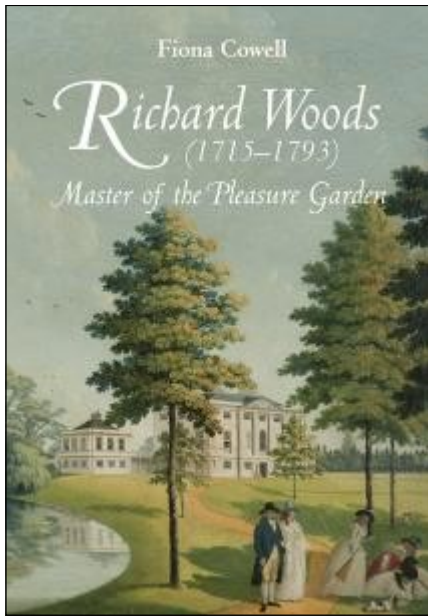
summer skies.

The Fyrish Monument is one of three follies built by Sir Hector: the others are smaller and sit on Meann Cnoc and Creag Ruadh, and are now visible from the road.





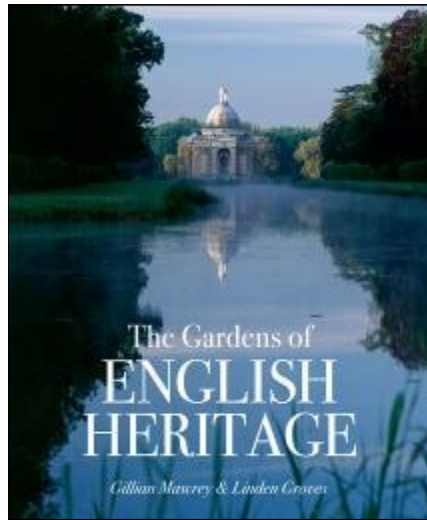
# Christmas Reading



**Richard Woods (1715-1793): Master of the Pleasure Garden.** Fiona Cowell. Boydell & Brewer, 2010. ISBN: 978-1-8438-3524-0 £50.00 Hardback

A contemporary of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, Richard Woods has never received the recognition he deserves: in contrast to Brown, he emphasised the pleasure ground and kitchen garden with a more pronounced use of flowers than was general among the landscape improvers of his time. He liked variety and incident in his plans and, where he was employed on a larger scale, the encroachment of the pleasure ground into the park created the Woodsian 'pleasure park'.

In this important work of detection and biography, Fiona Cowell analyses his designs and explores Woods's activities as a plantsman, a determined amateur architect and a farmer. In particular, she shows the difficulties he found as a Catholic living in penal times, examining the difficulties encountered by both Woods and his Catholic patrons, and placing the man and his work in their wider social and economic context. Unjustly neglected in the past, he is here given his rightful place among the creators of the English landscape style.

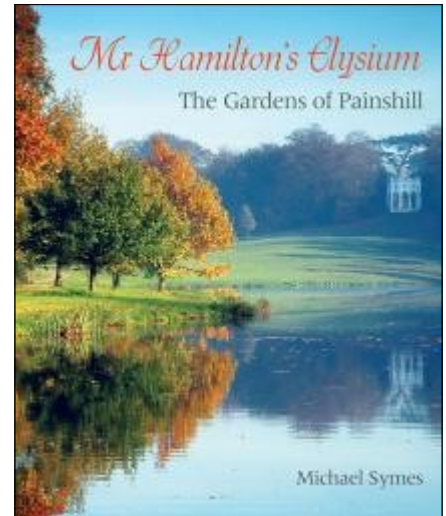


**The Gardens of English Heritage.** Gillian Mawrey and Linden Groves. Frances Lincoln, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-7112-2771-2 £25.00 Hardback

The Gardens of English Heritage is the first book to describe the parks and gardens owned by English Heritage, which are far less well-known than its evocative medieval abbeys or Victorian mansions. Yet these places offer a wide-ranging variety of gardening pleasures. Some have stunning designs, while others are important for their history or their plants. A surprising number are brand new and a few of the best are tiny. All have marvelously atmospheric surroundings.

From the formality of Wrest Park and Chiswick House to the rolling parkland slopes around Kenwood House; from Queen Victoria's garden at Osborne, complete with charming vegetable plots for the royal children, to the exotic Quarry Garden at Belsay Hall and the modern restraint of the Contemporary Heritage Scheme, here are gardens from every corner of England and almost every century. These essays tell the story of how each was created and of the sometimes eccentric families who owned them. The decay of their trees, fountains and statues is described, and the way they have been restored and survive to delight us today.

The book is written by Gillian Mawrey, who set up the Historic Gardens Foundation (HGF) in 1995, and by Linden Groves, who is a conservation officer with the Garden History Society and assistant to the HGF.



**Mr Hamilton's Elysium: The Gardens of Painshill.** Michael Symes. Frances Lincoln, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-7112-3055-2 £35.00 Hardback (£24.50 from Amazon)

The Hon. Charles Hamilton was one of those extraordinary eighteenth-century gentlemen who, like Lord Cobham at Stowe and Henry Hoare at Stourhead, turned their gardens into works of art. Inspired by his time in Italy, Hamilton set out to transform the 'accursed hill' at Painshill in Surrey into a picturesque landscape complete with serpentine lake and water wheel, Turkish Tent, 'Chinese Bridge', Ruined Abbey, Grotto and Hermitage. The garden soon ranked with the best in the land but it later lay forgotten until it was rediscovered in the 1970s. The restoration over the last thirty years or so has been as careful and dramatic as any. Now Painshill Park is visited by thousands each year.

The book is written by Michael Symes, who undertook much of the historical research that underpinned the restoration. He has taught and directed the Birkbeck College MA in Garden History course, and has written a number of books including *A Glossary of Garden History* and *The English Rococo Garden*.



At a time when we are worried about our impact on the environment and global warming, it is comforting to know that follies are leading the way with a range of sustainable alternatives. We already know that they can be built from recycled tyres and beer cans, but now we can include the natural product of willow.

Brampton Willows is a Suffolk based company specialising in the weaving of willow to furniture, fences and follies. In doing so they make use of the material's inherent pliability and the fact that it can withstand bad weather during the winter, assuming that anyone would want to leave them outside at that time.



Among the follies that have been built so far are ornamental seats, gazebos, temples and even a watchtower.

Three of the Brampton Willows follies.  
Photos: [www.bramptonwillows.co.uk](http://www.bramptonwillows.co.uk)



## Information Wanted

Do you know of any early jigsaw puzzles that include follies? If so, please send details of them to the usual address: [andrew@follies.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:andrew@follies.fsnet.co.uk)

## Gothick or Gothick?

Last month's e-Bulletin (32) sparked a discussion about whether it is correct to use 'Gothic' or 'Gothick' when describing the follies of the 18th century. Some pointed to 'Gothick' being the preferred style of writers like Barbara Jones, Headley and Meulenkamp, and James Stevens Curl whose *Oxford Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape* (2000) defines 'Gothick' as being 'only vaguely based on the archaeologically correct Gothic, and more connected with a taste for the exotic, so really a branch of Rococo frivolity. It was largely associated with Sanderson Miller's work, with Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill (1750–70), and especially with Batty Langley's pattern books...'

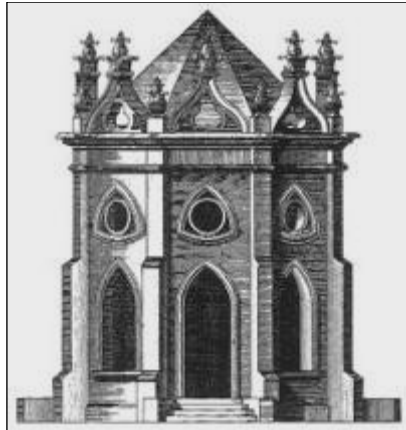
On the face of it, using the 'K' would appear to be correct, except that even sources of the time were confused. Batty Langley's book *Gothic Architecture Restored and Improved...in the Gothic Mode* (1742) includes the five orders of Gothic architecture, which he calls 'Gothick'; Pope also preferred to add the 'K' but Walpole often left it off. George Lyttelton was clearly so confused by it all that when he wrote about his follies at Hagley, he used a mixture of both to be on the safe side!

It is a question that Prof. David Watkin found intriguing because he had not previously given it much thought, adding 'I can't think of an article which discusses the matter of nomenclature (as in Anthony Blunt's essay, *Some Uses and Misuses of the Terms Baroque and Rococo as applied to Architecture*, 1972), but I think it's quite appropriate and pleasing to

retain *Gothick* for the world of Sanderson Miller and Batty Langley in the 1740s, 50s and a bit later, when it is still a light-hearted alternative to Chinese or Rococo.'

A similar view was taken by Michael Symes who said: 'I don't think there is a definitive answer, and as you rightly point out the practice varied even at the time...It is dangerous to be hard and fast about such things – let confusion flourish!'

This opinion was echoed by



Prof. Tim Mowl, who added 'I have always used *Gothick* to denote mid-18th-century revivalism of medieval forms...As you know, it is often characterised by later authorities as Rococo-Gothick, certainly when Kent uses it. Earlier forms, not

always pointed-arched, as in Vanbrugh's work, I have called Early Medievalism. Seventeenth-century Gothic I have always understood as Gothic Survival, as in church towers and buildings at Oxford especially.'

In concluding his e-mail, David Watkin added 'Though Strawberry Hill has been traditionally included in this Gothick category, Walpole announced in 1750 that 'I am going to build a little Gothic castle' and it is only fair to dignify it with

the term Gothic, not the faintly trivial Gothick.'

More research is needed to establish an answer, but in the meantime the with-k's have it.

Lastly, as if one debate at a time is not enough, Adam

Wilkinson correctly asked 'about the spelling of mediaeval, which for those of us educated in a small Scottish fishing village with a university attached, is missing the 'a!'



Unless otherwise stated, all pictures in this edition of the Bulletin are taken by the editor or from the Folly Fellowship Picture Library. We are grateful to all of the photographers for the generous use of their pictures. All views and comments that are expressed are those of the authors and are not necessarily the opinion or belief of The Folly Fellowship.