Foll-

The e-Bulletin of The Folly Fellowship

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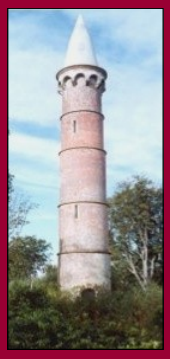
Issue 36:
March 2011

Events calendar:

- ***29 March—Birkbeck Garden History Society Annual Lecture*** *by Andrew Plumridge on Follies. Tickets = £10 each. Starts at 6.30pm at the Art Workers Guild, 6 Queen Square, Bloomsbury, London WC1N. Details from ruth.brownlow@gmail.com*
- ***Friday, 6 May—visit to East Sussex*** *to Eridge Park with its towers, sham walls, caves and gardens (including a talk by Christopher Abergavenney) and to Chiddingstone Castle (Kent) with its orangery, bridge, well, tower, gazebo and grounds. Details from ptodd@ptcs.eu*

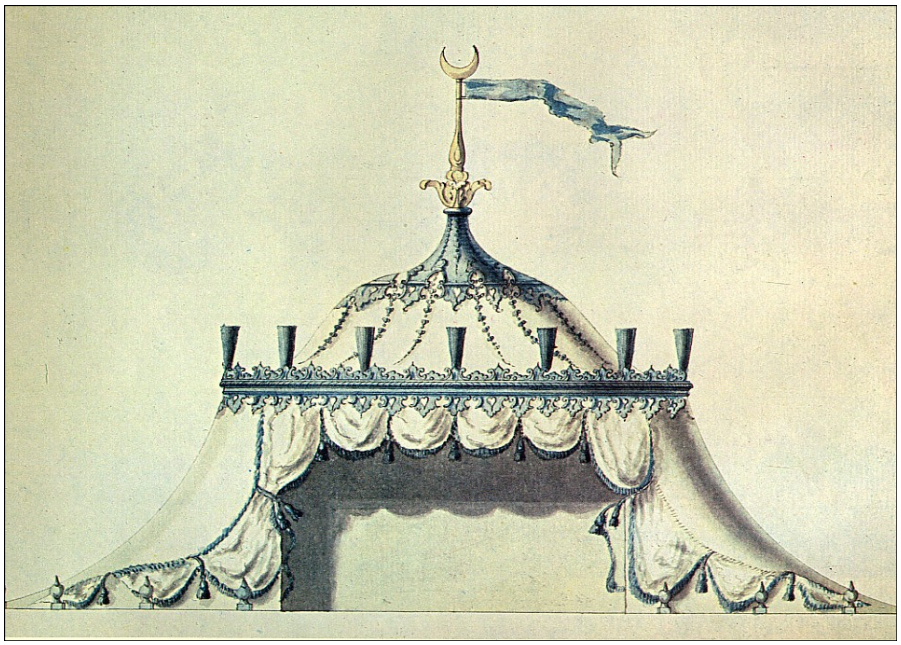


- ***21 May—visit to Wentworth Castle, Yorkshire*** *to see some of the many changes that have occurred since we last paid a visit in 2006. After an introductory talk by Patrick Eyres, we will tour the restored buildings. Details from karenlynch2009@gmail.com*

The Folly Fellowship

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

The Levant in Europe



Henry Keene's design for the Turkish Tent at Painshill Park, *c.* 1755

The Ottoman Empire reached its zenith during the 16th and 17th centuries, but finally met with defeat at the Battle of Vienna on 12 September 1683. The event was significant because it marked the start of the Habsburg Empire's political domination of Europe, and a period of European control of the Balkans.

Victory gave Europe control of the busy trade links that passed through Turkey, providing it with access to a range of luxury goods, including textiles, spices, musical instruments and especially, coffee. It began a fashion for *Turquerie* where Europeans embraced all that was exotic and fun in Turkish art and culture. In particular, gentlemen of the time stated to relax at home in Turkish robes, smoking Turkish tobacco, eating Turkish sweets and reading the latest Turkish tale. The first of these was Antoine Galland's *Les Mille et Une Nuits, contes Arabes traduits en Français* (1704), later published in English as *The Arabian Nights*. Meanwhile, other writers focussed on the treachery and fratricide of Turkey's past, or wrote about the

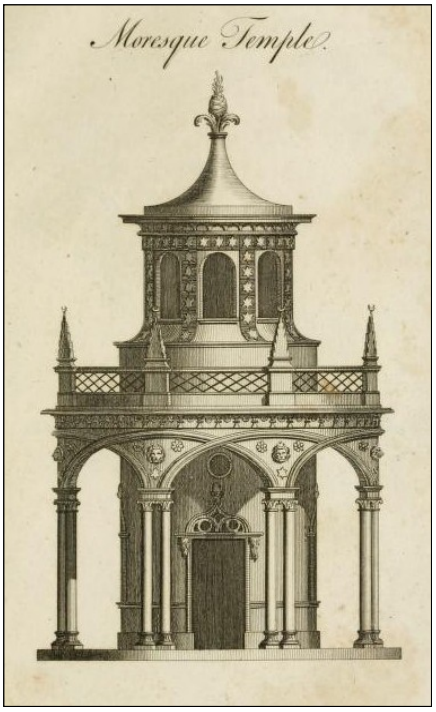
Thomas Hope, by William Beechey (1798)
In the National Portrait Gallery, London
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org

passion and intrigue of the Seraglio (harem). In doing so they introduced a sensuality and luxuriousness that had previously been lacking in Western literature, and led their readers to believe that Oriental men and women were more amorous and more indulgent than their European counterparts.

In the afternoons and evenings, ladies and gentlemen would often take refreshment at newly created coffee houses or attend the theatre to watch the latest play or opera based on a Turkish tale. Later they might attend colourful parties and *bals masqués* dressed as 'Tartars' where they would be entertained by *tableaux vivants* (living pictures), usually in gardens that had been embellished with Turkish and Moorish style follies to provide an appropriate backdrop.

To fuel this demand for follies, some designers published pattern books showing 'off-the-peg' ideas that could be built to order. In 1767, William Wrighte released his book *Grotesque Architecture or Rural Amusement*, which included a frontispiece of a gentleman and his architect standing in a park with a grotto, ruin and Moorish temple in the background (see below). Inside he revealed 28 designs for garden conceits and an explanation of their construction.

Among the designs were five ideas for Moorish temples, one of which (plate 26) Wrighte described as 'a medium between the Chinese and Gothic, having neither the levity of the former nor the gravity of the latter. The particularities of both this and the following design are taken from those famous remains of barbarian antiquity, the palace of *Alhambra*, at *Granada*, the ancient Moresque mosque at *Cordova*...[and]...the old cassavee or palace of the *Moorish* kings at *Mæquanez*.' Wrighte even confirmed the source of his design ideas, which he based on '*Willughbuy's* Travels into *Spain, Ockley's* Account of South or West *Barbary*, and Shaw's Travels to the *Levant*.'



Barbara Jones's book *Follies and Grottoes* (Constable, 1979), gives the impression that these structures were everywhere, saying that 'In many eighteenth-century topographical drawings, tour books and estate records, we find references to Moorish Kiosks and Turkish Tents. Most of them have gone; some were designed and never built.' There is, however, a surprising number that remain or been rebuilt in recent years.

The first mention of a Turkish tent appears in 1724 when a Dutch lawyer called Dirk Trip re-planned the gardens at his Buitenplaats (summer residence) in Velsen-Zuid, to the north-west of Amsterdam. As part of his new scheme he set out the footpaths in a *patte d'oie* (duck's foot) pattern with a Turkish tent at the end of one of the *allées*. Little more is known of the structure, which may simply have been a canvass tent in a Turkish style.

Britain's first recorded example stood overlooking the lake at Painshill Park (Surrey), and was designed by Henry Keene for the Hon. Charles Hamilton. It was built in 1759 and, unlike some of the others in Europe, was intended to be permanent. This meant that it was not dismantled and stored during the winter season, and may explain why it seems to have disappeared by 1870, with only the brick core remaining and providing a source of second-hand bricks. The building that exists at Painshill today is a modern reconstruction, and was completed in 1999.

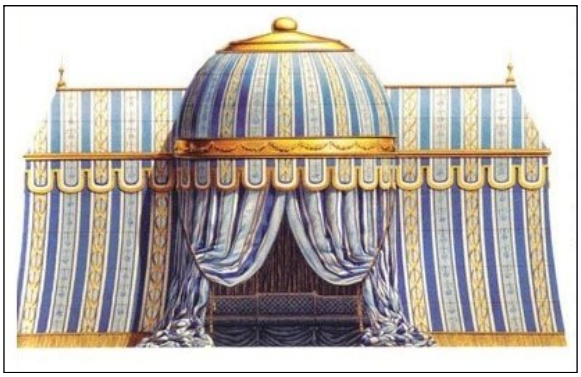
Henry Hoare was a friend of Hamilton, and the two exchanged ideas about the design and setting of follies. He built his own Turkish tent at Stourhead in 1776, which the diarist Caroline Lybbe Powys said was 'very pretty.' She went on to describe it as 'painted canvas so remains up the whole year; the inside painted blue and white mosaic.' It is likely that there was also one at Boughton House (Northamptonshire) in the 1770s, but all that remains of it today is its wooden framework.

Painshill Park Tent. *Photo:* Anthony McCallum (www.wyrdlight.com) at en.Wikipedia.org

The Turkish tent at Désert de Retz, France. *Photo:* P+R Boogaart (*Follies of France*, p.144)

In France, a Turkish tent was built on 'The Island of Happiness' at Désert de Retz (Chambourcy, Paris), where Francois Racine de Monville laid out his garden in the English style from 1774-89. He built there a total of seventeen follies, including a pyramid, temple to Pan, Chinese temple and a house that resembles the cracked base of a Classical column, all with the help of architect François Barbier, who later had to sue his client for his fee, but together they created one of the most important landscape gardens in Europe.

It is likely that the tent was built in 1780 but had long disappeared by the time that Olivier Choppin de Janvry and Jean-Marc Heftler acquired the site and began restoring its features. In 1990, they added a recreation of the tent in painted tin, using as their reference the excellent illustrations in Georges Le Rouge's book *Détails des nouveaux jardins à la mode* (1785).



France had another well-known tent at Parc Monceau (see above), in Paris, built in 1763 by Philippe d'Orleans, and featured in a painting by Louis Carmontelle entitled *Vue des tentes turques* painted in 1779.

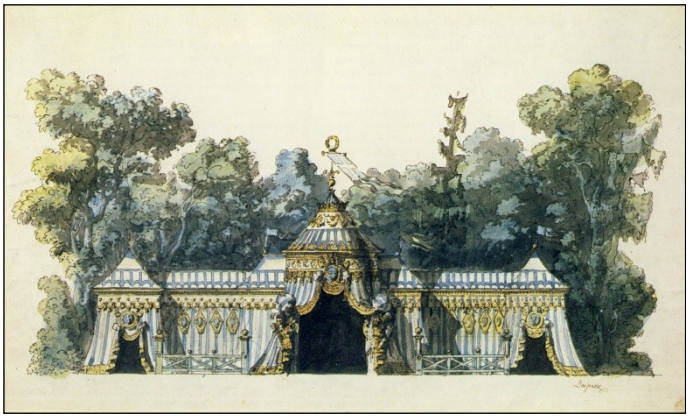
The Turkish tent, Drottningholm. *Photo:* Philip Greenspun at http://philip.greenspun/images

There are two well-known tents in Sweden: one at Haga and the other in the park at Drottningholm (at Lovön, Uppland), which dates back to King Gustav Vasa (1496–1560). It blossomed during the 18th century through the addition of follies, including a Chinese Pavilion (1753-63), a Gothic tower (1792-3) and the main tent, which was built in 1781 to a design by C. F. Adelcrantz using painted copper to disguise the fact that it served as barracks for the Palace Guard.

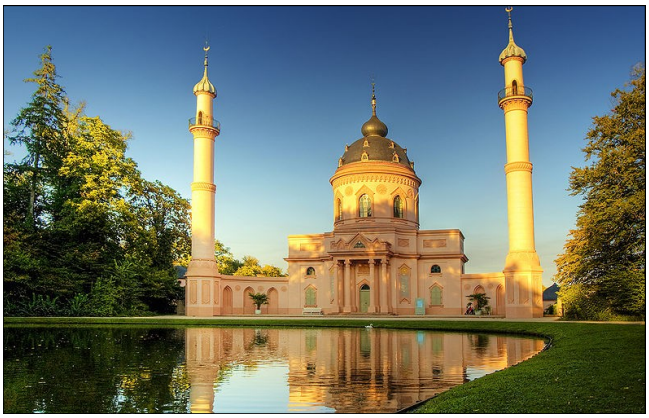
The better of the two parks is at Haga, to the north of Stockholm, and sometimes called the Gustavian Park after its founder King Gustav III. Work there began in 1781 under the direction of Fredrik Pyper, who had just returned from an eight year tour of European gardens, including Painshill where Pyper sketched its Turkish tent. He also visited Stowe and Stourhead. As a result, Haga is his own interpretation of an English park and makes use of natural features like the Brunnsviken lake and its hilly terrain, thus avoiding costly remodelling work. Although he planted around 26,000 trees and shrubs, Pyper only designed one of its follies—the Turkish Pavilion, which he built in 1787. The other follies were created by Olof Tempelman, who built the King's Pavilion and Summer Palace, and by the French artist L. J. Desprez, who also designed the so-called Copper Tents on either side of the Turkish Pavilion.

In 1780 Charles Theodore invited Nicolas de Pigage to build an ornamental mosque in the garden at Schwetzingen Castle, in Baden-Württemberg (Germany). His aim was to construct a building that reflected his interest in both Islam and the Orient. In doing so he started a move towards interest in India, something that continued into the first half of the 19th century.

Turkish tent at Haga Park by Louis Desprez (1787). *Source:* Wikimedia Commons



The ornamental mosque at Schwetzingen. *Photo:* Wolfgang Staudt on Wikipedia



Pineapples and Grots

After we released the February e-Bulletin, pineapples started popping up everywhere, including mention of the one at Dunmore in the Evening Standard and another in the Sunday Telegraph's *Seven Magazine* where Sandi Toksvig kindly mentioned us, saying 'The Folly Fellowship, whose very existence makes me glad to be alive...'

Patrick Todd reminded me that the first pineapple to be cultivated in England was grown at Dorney Court, near Windsor (Berkshire) and is commemorated by a carved pineapple in a corner of the Great Hall. Legend has it that during a dinner at the Mansion House in London, Charles II cut the top off a pineapple and handed it to the Earl of Castlemaine. His gardener at the time (John Rose) planted it at Dorney Court and the resulting fruit was later presented to the King (see *Foll-e* 35). By that time the Earl had lost his head gardener to the King.

The Great Hall at Dorney Court also has portraits of the Seven Eminent Turks, which Sir Roger Palmer brought back from Constantinople after his period as Charles II's travelling ambassador to the Levant.

Lastly, Landmark Trust tell me that there is no longer a waiting list to rent the Dunmore Pineapple, so if you want to do something different this year, contact them on 01628 825925 or by e-mail to bookings@landmarktrust.org.uk

"The Folly Fellowship, whose very existence makes me glad to be alive..."

News of three grotto stories also reached us this month.

The first involved the closure of Hugh Hefner's grotto at his Playboy Mansion in Los Angeles (CA), where according to the website www.tmz.com, health officials are investigating a possible link between a party there and a number of guests who have developed respiratory problems. There is said to be no truth in the rumour that health officials want to monitor the chests of the party goers!

In the Australian State of Victoria, excitement surrounded the reopening of the Rippon Lea House grotto after 25 years. The grounds were laid out for the Sargood family by William Sangster in 1882, and include a lake and ornamental bridges.

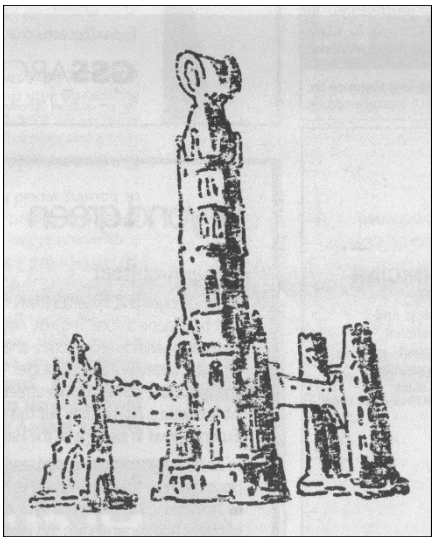
Stowe Landscape Gardens also revealed its restored grotto but spoiled the moment by putting on a high-society Georgian tea for two actors so they could answer questions about Georgian life to bemused visitors. It was followed by poetry readings from other players dressed as Alexander Pope and James Thompson, and a performance from a local flute quartet. Thankfully, this event appears to be a one-off, so visitors will be able to enjoy the grotto's unique sense of place without feeling like they are in Disneyland.

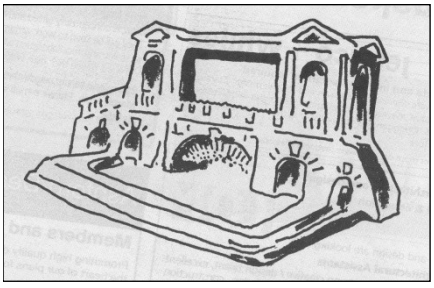
The Price of Boot Scrapers

Anyone who knows how The Folly Fellowship began will also know that we owe much to the ranting of the late Cedric Price. During one of his lectures to the Oxford University Architectural Society he showed a photograph of a folly and told his audience that "this complete waste of space should be torn down and replaced by something useful like an office block."

It was a bold statement to make irrespective of his location, and it so inflamed a young undergraduate that he promised to do something to protect follies when he had the chance. I did, and with the help of Gwyn Headley, Wim Meulenkamp, Michael Cousins and Vernon Gibberd, the Folly Fellowship was duly formed.

For a short time in his career, Cedric was agony uncle to *Building Design* magazine (BD) where he offered wisdom to the architectural profession. He would often sign off with 'the latest instalment in a protracted exchange about the curious world of 19th century cast-iron boot scrapers' (BD, 19 Feb 2010) and a drawing of one. Among BD's own collection is one which Cedric based on Wyatt's tower at Fonthill, and another based on the Palladian Bridge at Wilton, which came 'with its own brush and mud tray and has the added benefit of being too heavy to need a steadying handle' (BD, *Op.Cit.*).





Pictures reproduced from Building Design Magazine, 19 February 2010