



Issue 37:
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Events calendar:

- **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
- **18 June—A visit to Clearbeck Gardens** in Lancaster, Kirkby Lonsdale to see Ruskin's View and Andy Goldworthy's Sheepfolds. Details from clearbeckarts@yahoo.co.uk.
- **29 July—A visit to Tabley House** at Knutsford and Eaton Hall in Cheshire. Details from ijackson@liv.ac.uk.
- **24 September—Herefordshire Ramble**, with visits to Cadmore Millennium Tower, Westonbury Water Gardens and Hampton Court. Details from pfgodfrey@gmail.com

Landmark Trust Open Days:

- **22 May—The Gothick Temple** at Stowe, Buckinghamshire.
- **17-19 June—Queen Anne's Summerhouse** at Old Warden, Bedfordshire.

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 Follies of



STROUD



Given its importance to the Cotswold wool market, it is surprising that little of Stroud's trade wealth is reflected in its civic architecture. All that seems to be changing now that the area is home to Anne Robinson, Jilly Cooper and half the Royal family! But what the town lacks in civic buildings is more than replaced by its collection of follies.

Looming over the southern part of Stroud is the parish of Rodborough, where the Rev'd Audry was rector until his death on 21 March 1997, and where he wrote the last of his *Thomas the Tank Engine* stories. The area is dominated by Rodborough Common and by Fort George, a folly that is better known as **Rodborough Fort**.

The site of the miniature castle enjoys panoramic views across the seven valleys that converge at Stroud and on to the River Severn and South Wales in the distance, giving it considerable strategic value. This was recognised by Iron Age man who had a settlement here, and by the Romans who built a fort on the site to protect their encampment at Woodchester. It was also a fact that was not lost on Captain George Hawker who in 1761 built a garrison fort here in his attempt to maintain law and order. His original building housed 250 men and 32 canons, some being used to capture the Highwayman Tom Long before he was hanged on the turnpike road at a place called Tom Long's Post.

When Hawker died in 1786, the fort passed through many hands,

including those of Joseph Grazebrook who owned Stroud Brewery and who lived in the fort from 1802-42. It was then bought in 1868 by Alexander Halcombe who rebuilt it two years later on a grander scale.

The folly is celebrating its 250th anniversary this year and owes its survival to the racing driver and aviator Robert Lamplough. In 1995 he bought the dilapidated folly from the National Trust and set about restoring it. Having done so, he moved to Africa and sold the folly for a reputed £2.25 million.

Nearby Rodborough Manor burnt down in 1906. A century before that the High Sheriff and prison reformer Sir George Onesiphorous Paul added an eyecatcher (below) called The Gateway with the help of his architect, Anthony Teck. Known as the **Amberley eyecatcher** it has two round towers with gothic windows set either side of a battlemented arch that has been filled in to create a family home—can anyone explain why people who live in eyecatchers almost always plant trees along the boundary to block the view?



At Chalford, **The Grove** is a private house with a terraced garden containing a grotto and a summerhouse with three ogee-arches beneath a curved pediment. Nearby, **Wickham Grange Guest House** has a 19th century gazebo, while another from the 18th-century sits in the grounds of **Over Court** at Bisley.

Nether Lypiatt Manor is the former home of Prince and Princess Michael of Kent, and now home to one of the Labour Peers. It is often described as a stately home in miniature, with a striking if understated retro-Classical appearance and resembling an oversized doll's house. It was built in 1693 for Charles Coxe, a Justice of the Peace for the Brecon, Radnor and Glamorgan circuit, and later the Member of Parliament for Cirencester and then Gloucester. History describes him as a hanging judge who preferred the company of animals to humans, so much so that on one occasion he is said to have reprieved a local ironsmith while he repaired the gates at Nether Lypiatt, and then sent him to be hanged at Gloucester Jail when his work was done.

His softer side was reserved for pets, including his favourite horse called Wag, who is said to have walked by itself to Stroud to collect the judge's groceries. When it died in 1721, the horse was buried in a dingle to the south of the house and the spot marked with a small obelisk. A plaque records:

*My name is Wag that rolled the green,
The oldest horse that ever was seen.
My years they numbered forty-two,
I served my Master just and true.*

The original plaque was stolen at some time before 1934, but was replaced in 1938. It is said that

Wag's spectre still haunts the house and that the sound of hoofs can be heard on Christmas Eve.

The west entrance to **Lypiatt Park** is marked with a handsome gothic gate lodge that probably



dates from the 1840s (see left).

In Woodchester there is a three-sided **pyramid** in the grounds of St. Mary's Church, with each side representing a member of the Holy Trinity. It sits on a circular base that is symbolic of Eternity, and a lower hexagonal stone carrying inscriptions in memory of the Dunn family who built it in the mid 19th century.

Woodchester Park is overshadowed by the unfinished mansion and has few follies. One is a pretty **boat-house** that was probably built during Repton's remodel-

ling of the park, and the other is the hard to find and very private tower above the ridge (see below).



The Tower at Woodchester Park

For a landscape park Woodchester has a curious dearth of follies, especially considering it was remodelled in the 18th and 19th centuries when folly building was at its mania. Perhaps some follies were built, but there is precious little evidence to substantiate their existence.

Woodchester's only folly is the brilliantly positioned 'Tower' approximately halfway along the north edge of the long, narrow and very deep Inchbrook Valley. Somewhat overshadowed by the legacy of its neighbour the extraordinary never completed Victorian gothic-revival mansion by Benjamin Bucknell, it is in fact the oldest extant building in the park.

Very little is known of the Tower's history and origin, but according to the 1986 sale particular it was a Royal Hunting Lodge built c.1720. The regal connection appears to be tenuous, although George III and George V as guests of Lord Ducie supposedly made the arduous carriage journey up the side of the valley to the Tower.

It is rumoured that the Tower was used to keep an eye on the entrances at both ends of the park



whilst illicit liaisons went on in the Georgian mansion: both entrances are now obscured by woods. Indeed the Tower has an almost Big Brother command of the park with its panoramic vistas, and in reverse it makes a great eyecatcher from many positions.

It is not strictly a folly because it has been used domestically throughout the last century and never quite without a purpose throughout its history (albeit spying!), and even as a summer-house according to a Regency

map of the park—in fact it is marked on every map since 1777.

The Tower is a small rectangular stone building of two storeys, sitting somewhat perilously on the edge of the aptly titled Break Heart Hill. It is built on a roughly-hewn stone base supposedly dating from as early as 1609 when the park was enclosed. The Tower's castellated parapet suggests a gothic mood in contrast to the baroque window surrounds with their Gibbsian keystones. Other features include a prominent central chimney stack behind the parapet and a little entrance porch (which looks like a later addition) with the remains of a millstone or garden seat as the front doorstep.

I have not been inside, but from the sale particular photographs it looks like a luxurious though compact dwelling. Lord Ducie commissioned the architect Sir John Soane to design a neo-classical prospect tower possibly for Woodchester in 1797, and it is interesting to ponder on if this was intended as a replacement for this humble little tower.

Oliver Bradbury

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The Cheesewring Monument

The entry for Selsley (Glos) has to be a contender for the shortest in *H+M Follies*, saying simply: 'Below Selsley, southwest of Stroud, is an Ionic column on a plinth standing anonymously in a field under Stanley Park' (p.246).

What, no explanation of why it is there or when it was built? Since I live nearby (Bristol), I decided to investigate.

I drove there in August, parked in the village and looked down the steep slope of Stanley Park—nothing! How tall is it? Three foot? Perhaps it's less of a column and more of a columnette—no such word, of course, but there ought to be. Nor was it the large chimney on the A419, or the one at Stanley Mill in King's Stanley.

In the end, John Loosley of the Stroud Local History Society came to the rescue, and referred me to a report by Theo Stening in the 2000 *Journal of the Gloucestershire So-*

ciety for Industrial Archaeology. It included a photograph of the thirty-foot (9.100 metre) high monolithic column with an Ionic cap and substantial square pedestal standing within the park directly below All Saints Church, Selsley.

So how did it get there and what does it commemorate? We all love follies that have a good story, and this one deserves more than the three lines it received in that book. It turned out that it was worked in the Cheesewring Quarry near Liskeard (Cornwall) and was transported to London firstly by the Liskeard and Caradon Railway, then the Liskeard and Looe Union Canal, and finally by sea where it was eventually unloaded at Lambeth Wharf. There, the pedestal, cap and base were added and the whole ensemble hauled by horse and cart to Hyde Park where it was displayed at The Great Exhibition of 1851.

It stood outside the western end of the main glass-roofed complex as part of the Raw Materials, Mining, Quarrying, Metallurgical and Mineral Products Section. Next to it was "an obelisk, several large naval anchors, a twenty-four-ton slab of coal and other less pilferable objects!" It would be good to know where the obelisk ended up?

The column "was acquired at the end of the exhibition by the prominent mill-owner and clothier Mr Samuel Stephens Marling, who re-erected it in the grounds of his recently purchased estate, Stanley Park, in 1852." It still stands there today like an island lighthouse, which may have been its intended purpose because local folklore tells

of a light or lantern resting above the giant capital, but this has never been proved.

In a final twist to the tale, when the Department of the Environment listed it in 1953 (grade II), the description said it was erected in memory of one of Mr Marling's favourite horses. Again we have no proof, but Gloucestershire's love of equines knows no bounds. These errors nonetheless have greater curiosity, given that the south face of the plinth states:

This Column,
carved at the
Cheesewring Stone Quarries
near Liskeard, Cornwall,
Stood at the western end
Of the
Great Exhibition, London
1851
And was placed here
By
Samuel Stephens Marling
1852

The Cheesewring Granite Company is owned by the Duchy of Cornwall and made a name for itself supplying stone for the Westminster and Tower Bridges and the Albert Memorial. It closed in the early 1950s.

Richard Webber

According to *H+M Follies*, Gloucestershire has many inscriptionless columns commemorating some forgotten event or person. One stands in a field to the north of Fairford Park School, and was originally part of a 17th-century mansion that was demolished in the 1950s. The column is believed to be one that was added by Sir John Soane during his alterations of the mansion in 1789. There is also a group of Ionic columns in a garden on the B4208 at Staunton on the Gloucestershire-Worcestershire border.

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.



The Column outside the Great Exhibition Hall in 1851. Photo: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam