Appendix

to *Follies in France, Scratching the Surface*

published as *Follies* Journal #9 and #10, 2010
and Journal #15, 2016
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Please allow us a quick introduction. After twenty years it was high time to update the list of follies in France that had appeared in Magazine #2 of the Folly Fellowship (1988/89). We started with some articles in the magazine, but after several *Tours de France* it became clear that we had too much material, so we decided to put it in a little book. The annual Journal lacked an editor at the time and we were asked to dress the information in the guise of a journal, although we don't usually write in the learned, academic style of the journal. And we had only one subject-matter. Never mind. The material grew and we were asked to produce two journals, #9 and #10. Okay. But we also wanted people to have at their disposal all the articles that had appeared about France in the magazine before. References to them are made in both journals. That's when we hit upon the idea to use the internet. The website manager of the Folly Fellowship website (www.follies.org.uk) cooperated to publish this **Appendix** in the format that you have now in front of you.

Clicking in the contents list will guide you to the pieces mentioned.

All illustrations were originally in black and white, but as colour comes at no extra cost on the web unless you print, we have introduced colour where we could. We also added more pictures in some cases, as we were not limited to the space available in a magazine or journal. The pictures are copyright of the authors of articles or other photographers credited. In a few cases we added a *département* number or bits of text, embraced by [square brackets], for clarity. More comments you can find in journals 9 and 10, which are for sale and obtainable through the FF website.

After journals 9 and 10 were finished we kept going back to France and we thought of a way of including our new finds and possible future updates in this Appendix too. That is why we tacked on **Addenda** at the end of the Appendix, containing pictures and snippets of text that didn't make it to the journals.

We hope you will enjoy browsing through.

Eindhoven, September 2010 **Pieter and Rita Boogaart**

This Appendix was updated, particularly in the Addenda, after Journal 10 was published. We hope you will contribute your discoveries, as some of you already have. Enjoy.

Eindhoven, March 2011 **Pieter and Rita Boogaart**

This Appendix was updated again, particularly in the Addenda section, when Journal 15 (Follies in France III) was published. In order to make later updates of the Appendix and the Addenda easier we thought it better to divide these into two separate documents. At the end of this updated Appendix you will only find an explanation and a link to a separate document with all Addenda to Follies in France on the FF website.

The pages in Journal #9 are numbered 1 to 98, in Journal #10: 99 to 204, in Journal #15: 205 to 286. With the appearance of *Follies in France III* we have introduced a simplified reference notation. We now refer to particular pages in the books as follows: FiF;page-number. So Journal 10, page 129 reads FiF;129.

On the FF website you can also find a **Gazetteer** to all follies we could find, in order of *départements*. This may be useful for the travellers amongst you. If you would come upon unlisted follies in France, please let us know and we will try to update the Gazetteer. Enjoy.

Eindhoven, December 2016 Pieter and Rita Boogaart

Contents

Follies in France

DESPITE WHAT WE MAY LIKE TO THINK, follies are not exclusively English. In the introduction to *Follies*, Gwyn Headley and Wim Meulenkamp wrote that "the finest, purest folly in the world, it must be said, was French, the **Palais Idéal** in Hautrives . . ." With that in mind, we have started to compile lists of follies overseas, starting across the Channel in France. Remember that we use the word Folly in its loosest sense to cover follies, grottos, garden buildings, romantic gardens and any eccentric architecture.

Here then is a start on the French listing. It has been compiled from visits, letters, magazine articles and books, including two essential books for any folly enthusiast—*Jardins Imaginaires* by Bernard Lassus and *Fantastic Architecture* by Elffers and Schuyt.

The process of cataloguing has been the same as in Great Britain—county or departement (easier in France because they're all numbered), followed simply by a number for each site. The numbers will be allocated as we learn of the sites. If a site has several follies, like the Desert de Rétz, they will be listed as subdivisions of the prime site number, e.g. 78/1/1 La Maison Colonne; 78/1/2 Sham Abbey; 78/1/3 Pyramid Ice House; 78/1/4 Temple etc. Confused? We hope not.

Ain 01
Aisne 02
Allier 03
Alpes-de-Haute-Provence 04
Alpes (Hautes) 05
Alpes-Maritime 06
Ardèche 07
Ardennes 08
Ariège 09
Aube 10
Aude 11
Aveyron 12
Bouches-du-Rhône 13
13/1 CHATEAURENARD, Pastouret jardin imaginaire
Calvados 14
14/1 DIVES-SUR-MER, Mosaic house
Cantal 15
Charente 16
16/1 MAGNAC-LAVALETTE-VILLARS, La Mercerie
Charente-Maritime 17
Cher 18
Corrèze 19
Corse-du-Sud 2A
Haute-Corse 2B
Côte-d'Or 21
Côtes-du-Nord 22
Creuse 23
Dordogne 24
Doubs 25
Drôme 26
26/1 HAUTERIVES, Palais Idéal
Eure 27
27/1 BROGLIE, Sistine Chapel
27/2 LOUVIERS, Maison Vasseur
Eure-et-Loir 28
28/1 CHARTRES, Maison Isidore
Finistère 29
Gard 30
30/1 ARGILLIERS, Château du Majorat de Castille
Garonne (Haute) 31
Gers 32
Gironde 33
33/1 SAUVETERRE DE GUYENNE, Guitet jardin imaginaire
Hérault 34
34/1 AGDE, Noah's Ark
34/2 MONTPELLIER, Maison Grazzi
Ille-et-Vilaine 35
35/1 ROTHENEUF, Fouère carved rocks
Indre 36
Indre-et-Loire 37
37/1 AMBOISE, Pagôde de Chanteloup
Isère 38
Jura 39
Landes 40
Loir-et-Cher 41
Loire 42
Loire (Haute) 43
Loire-Atlantique 44
Loiret 45
45/1 FAY-AUX-LOGES, Le Manège
Lot 46
Lot-et-Garonne 47
Lozère 48
Maine-et-Loire 49
Manche 50
Marne 51
Marne (Haute) 52
52/1 ST DIZIER, Petit Paris
Mayenne 53
53/1 COSSE-LE-VIVIEN, La Frenouse
Meurthe-et-Moselle 54
54/1 MOUTIERS, jardin imaginaire
Meuse 55
Morbihan 56
Moselle 57
57/1 COCHEREN, Hansen jardin imaginaire
Nièvre 58
Nord 59
Oise 60
60/1 BOULOGNE-LA-GRASSE, L'Escargot
60/2 ERMENONVILLE, Parc Jean-Jacques Rousseau
Orne 61
Pas-de-Calais 62
62/1 BOULOGNE-SUR-MER, Liner House
62/2 RUITZ, Snow White's Garden
Puy-de-Dôme 63
Pyrénées-Atlantique 64
Pyrénées (Hautes) 65
Pyrénées-Orientales 66
Rhin (Bas) 67
Rhin (Haut) 68
Rhône 69
Saône (Haute) 70
Saône-et-Loire 71
Sarthe 72
72/1 FYE, Chatelain jardin imaginaire
Savoie 73
Savoie (Haute) 74
Paris 75
75/1 PARC DES BUTTES-CHAUMONT 20, Sham mountain
75/2 PLACE M NADAUD 20, Cement-tree house
75/3 RUE QUINCAMPOIX 3, Trompe l'oeil house
Seine-Maritime 76
Seine-et-Marne 77
77/1 ACHERES-LA-FORET, Village d'art pre-ludien
Yvelines 78
78/1 AIGREMONT, Desert du Rétz
78/2 VERSAILLES, Le Hameau
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Vienne (Haute) 87
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91/1 ST VRAIN, La Tete de Morte Mart
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92/1 LA GARENNE-COLOMBES, Maison Laglaine
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94/1 PERIGNY-SUR-YERRES, Closerie Falballa
Val-d'Oise 95
95/1 ENGHIEN-LES-BAINS, Boat Casino

If any readers can help with discoveries, photos, information, map references etc. please let the Folly Fellowship know.

HAUTERIVES (Drôme) – Palais idéal (Façac

[Comment: The previous page is what it all started with. It appeared in *FOLLIES* #2, 1988/89. Gwyn Headley deserves top marks for this initiative. But after twenty years his shorthand list undeniably needed replacing. Many things must be added , and some have changed or couldn't be found. Especially in the case of what Gwyn calls *jardin imaginaire* (we call them fantasy garden or outsider garden) – they don't have eternal life. But then: who does?

I don't intend to make a list of things that aren't correct (anymore). You will have come across them in the articles or in Journal 10's new List.

A great number of articles about French follies have already appeared in *FOLLIES* magazine. What follows is a republication of these articles in the order of their appearance, so that you may have them complete. We have only left out the loosest of remarks in previous magazines.]

FOLLIES 4;8-9 (Autumn 1989)

Follies au frais de l'état [1]

ANDREW PLUMRIDGE

It cannot have escaped your attention that the French have been revelling in rebellion again. This year marks the bicentenary of the French Revolution and the nation, or more particularly the Parisiens, have been enjoying a year-long celebration.

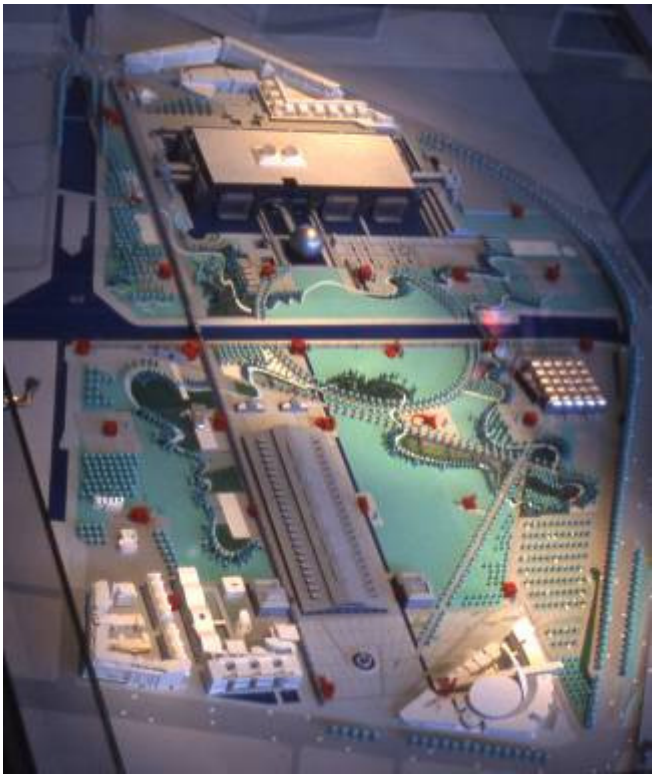
Getting into Paris [75] is proving difficult—it's more congested than usual, hotel vacancies are few and prices seem to have doubled—but, if you are lucky enough, be sure to visit the *Grand Projets*, and particularly the new landscape parks, which architecturally honour the event.

While President Mitterand has been busy emulating his more famous predecessor Napoleon by building his own *Arc de Triomphe—La Grande Arche* at *Tête Défense*—his Mayor of Paris and political rival, Jacques Chirac, has enjoyed custody of the *Ville de Paris*[2] and, since 1977, created 102 *espaces verts*[3]. One of these is the *Parc de la Villette* in the north-east of the city.

The project became the subject of an international competition in 1982, though it is not possible to award full credit to Chirac on this occasion. The concept was announced by the President and from that time *le rivale*—President and Mayor, Mitterand and Chirac, and left and right—have maintained personal interest in its development and supported it with public sector funding.

Such support is not surprising. France has long enjoyed a strong commitment to all forms of environmental planning, landscape and the visual appearance of its towns and cities: a message recently echoed by President Mitterand—*"Vous savez quel prix j'attache a l'aménagement des villes. Nous n'aurons rien fait si nous n'avons pas créé dans les dix années à venir les bases de la civilisation urbaine*" ("You know how much I value town planning. We will have done nothing if we have not created the foundations of urban civilisation in the next decade"). The French also regard landscape design as a visual art and encourage its development in a way long forgotten in Britain.

Unlike in the United Kingdom, new French parks are progressive and modern. Little enjoyment appears to be found in narrow nationalistic pseudo-vernacularism or Classical revivalism, and the design brief for *Villette* was aimed accordingly—'to design a park for the twenty-first century'. Arguably this, perhaps above all else, is what makes *la Villette*, together with *le Parc de les Halles* (1979), *le Parc de Citroën-Cévennes* (1985) and *le Parc de Bercy* (1987) enormously successful whilst our own British garden festivals have been half-hearted and engendered little excitement.



Macquette Parc de la Villette ©PRB

The competition was won by the Swiss architect Bernard Tschumi, in March 1983 and, as seems to be fashionable, designed around an inflated ideology—"… a park must be able to adapt and change with the people who use it ... such open air public cultural spaces must be compatible with urban modes of life in constant transformation ... Hence the structure of the park must encourage as well as support a number of unprogrammed activities". *Quel?*

Given such eloquent rhetoric it is disappointing to report little visual evidence of unprogrammed activities—you'll find much more of that in the simple square outside the *Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges-Pompidou*. You will, however, find a palette of architectural students unravelling or questioning design form and structural objects.

Tschumi calls these objects his 'follies', but are they? A folly is a "big, Gothick, ostentatious, over-ambitious and useless structure, preferably with a wildly improbable legend attached"[4]. Tschumi's are not. His are conspicuous structures in bright red enamelled metal, modestly proportioned and modern (some even labelled them as Russian Constructivism). They are simple and have functional form by

permitting access to all levels, from which, amid the planting boxes, it is worth recalling the 'wildly improbable legend'—the design ideology!

Barbara Jones, as always, enters left with a helpful concession. A folly, she says, should be "… erected for ornament ..."[5], which Tschumi's are. But, Jones continues, "More mood and emotion are built into follies than any kind of architecture"[6] and this is where the Villette follies come unstuck. They are not architectural, they are sculptural.

Perhaps the answer lies in Tschumi's own definition of a 'folly'—"... a set of ephemeral constructions whose role was that of a critical laboratory for architecture. The word 'follies' was meant to be ironical, playing with the concepts of uselessness and excess ..."[7]. This referred to his '*Staircase for Scarface'* construction in Castle Clinton, near Wall Street, U.S.A., and has been stretched into his *20th Century Follies* series of which *La Villette* is now part. It doesn't provide the answer however.

Clearly Tschumi, with others, believes such works to be suitable for follydom. His work at *Villette* joins others in London and Middelburg in the Netherlands, and projects destined for Kassel in West Germany and Toronto in Canada.

Whether or not these are loved or loathed I cannot tell but, as for Villette, the architect Piers Gough leaves little room for compromise, describing *le Parc de la Villette* as "Tschumi's scrapyard at abattoir park[8] ..." which "...represent the victory of intellectual arrogance over dry humanistic intentions in making a park, … A square grid with a building on every intersection, and steel constructions following the X and Y axes, ensure there is no space left for plants, growth etc. Follies only *de grandeur*, they are Cod-Constructivist structures enamelled in uneven and unsubtle red, as pastiche in their way as any mock Georgian building"[9].

I suppose the problem is that, in my opinion at least, the Villette follies don't feel like follies. They are too hard, too bright, too crisp and too pristine. There are also too many of them following similar designs to be worthy of the title *Parc des Follies*[10] and visitors will soon feel thirsty for variety, even though no two sculptures are identical. Added to that it is worth recalling that a true folly builder would not presume to label his creation as 'folly'. Such distinctions are awarded by others.

As garden sculpture, Tschumi's objects are *trés bonne* but, as architectural follies they must be seen as *tromperies*. However, don't take my word for it—visit, see and judge for yourselves.

Parc de la Villette, Tschumi's belvedere ©PRB

Notes:

1. 'Follies on the rates'.
2. An area covering the historic city within the *Périphérique* (the inner ring road containing the mid-nineteenth century fortifications) and the *Bois de Vincennes* and *Bois de Boulogne.*
3. Parks, gardens and squares.
4. Headley, G. and Meulenkamp, W. *FOLLIES: A National Trust Guide*, Jonathan Cape, 1986.
5. Jones, B. *Follies & Grottoes*, Constable. 1974.
6. Jones, B. *op. cit.*
7. Archer, B.J. *FOLLIES*: *Architecture for the late-Twentieth-Century Landscape*. Rizzoli International Publications Inc.. 1983.
8. The site had formerly housed abattoirs until 1974.
9. Gough, P. *Cough in Paris*, The Architects' Journal, 12 July 1989, Number 2/Volume 190, pp 24-9.
10. Archer, B.J. *op. cit.*

FOLLIES 8;2-3 (Winter 1991)

A new threat to the Désert de Retz

OLIVIER CHOPPIN DE JANVRY

The Désert de Retz, on the edge of the Forest of Marly between Paris and Versailles, combines allegorical buildings with rare trees; it is a masterpiece of eighteenth-century architecture and thinking.

Although protected by the French Department for Historic Monuments and Listed Sites, the Désert is still under threat. For fifty years, the Désert de Retz was the subject of dispute between its former owners who wanted to abandon it, and the government which wished to conserve it. Finally, it was officially listed for conservation together with the valley in which it lies; André Malraux steered a law through the French parliament to allow the government to intervene.

In 1986 the new owners, the Groupe Worms, realising that they could do nothing with the 270 hectare site in the valley of the Buzot de Joyenval stream and of the Désert de Retz without restoring the buildings and park of the Désert, ceded the park to the Société Civile du Désert de Retz, specially set up by Olivier Choppin de Janvry and Jean-Marc Heftler with the remit to restore it and its follies. At the same time the Groupe Worms obtained planning permission for a major 36 hole golf complex on the rest of the site.

The conditions governing the development of the golf course were contained in a building permit signed by the Minister of Culture and the Minister of Equipment; in essence, the Groupe Worms could only be allowed to restore that part of the Désert de Retz allocated to golf and to develop the remainder of the valley on the sole condition that they respected the landscape of this listed site. The Société Civile du Désert de Retz and the Groupe Worms were therefore permitted to carry out the complete rehabilitation of this exceptional landscape so long as the conditions of listing by the department of Historic Sites and Monuments were respected.

Restoration work by the Société Civile du Désert de Retz began in 1986, and in recognition of its work to date it has received the First Prize of Masterpieces In Peril Award in 1989, the Prix Lajoue from the French Association for Historic Houses in 1987 and awards from the American foundations and French conservation societies. Meanwhile Golf Européen appointed the American golf designer Robert Trent Jones to design the course. Over the last eighteen months works bearing no relation to those specified in the 1988 planning permit have been carried out. These helter-skelter works have completely changed the character of this historic listed site; Buzot brook, formerly skirting the meadow, is now nothing more than a trench or rather an open sewer; the once gently curving pools and picturesque lakes are more like storm basins for motorways; the greens and the tees are like giant molehills and the whole ensemble looks like a military proving ground.

The site has erupted with moguls; perhaps acceptable on a golfing level but anarchic, disgraceful and totally at odds with the historic landscape. The developers, having denied any transgressions right up to last June, were forbidden by M. Delpont, the Préfet of Yvelines, to continue working on the site from July 20th 1990. The local council has had the police checking the implementation of the Préfet's decision daily, but it is obvious that under the guise of service and maintenance the works are continuing with impunity.

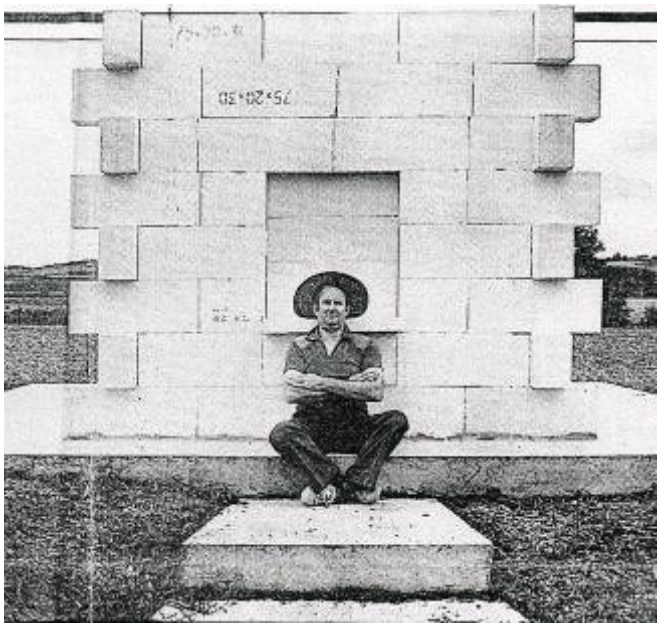
Now the developers are searching for ways to have the existing works accepted as a *fait accompli*; this is unacceptable. Their revised building applications submitted at the end of November attempts to get retrospective permission for work which was never authorised.

The government, neighbouring landowners, conservations groups and everyone who respects the environment must unite to condemn this travesty perpetrated by these golf developers. If we agree to the Joyenval golf project in the context of the planning permission granted at the end of 1988, we are saying No to the vandalism of developers who think only of their golf scheme and their personal short-term profits, and who have ignored landscapes, listings, protection, the law, beauty, promises made, history and the environment. We say No to the new planning application which seeks to legitimise construction already completed without permission, and which is a shocking caricature of the project initially approved in 1988, which the mayor of Chambourcy [78] with the Préfet of Yvelines must respect in its entirety. Prompt action is necessary to say No to the organised destruction of the Buzot brook and the meadows of Joyen-val – a landscape of extraordinary quality which surrounds, protects and forms an integral part of the Désert de Retz.

[The article was followed by an invitation to become a Friend of the Désert de Retz and a petition to the relevant ministers.-*Ed.*]

FOLLIES 8;9 (Winter 1991)
In the News
Sunday Times Folly No 1
[GWYN HEADLEY]

The Gardening Editor of the Sunday Times has built his own folly in southern France. Originally intended as a Roman Belvedere, Graham Rose and his friend Christopher Whitmey have erected something which even Rose confesses is not a thing of beauty - it has 'the allure of a war memorial' - and has been hailed by friends as a cross between a bus station and a chariot stop. Pay no attention to them, Mr Rose - they are philistines who don't appreciate the Lego-like qualities of Siporex, the light but strong building material used for the folly. Well done.



Christopher Whitmey in front of Rose's folly
from Sunday Times

[**Comment**

Even after Gwyn managed to find the original Sunday Times article (with photograph) that this short report was based on, we were not any the wiser as to where exactly this folly was. The south of France is a big place. So I wrote an email to the Sunday Times asking where Graham Rose used to live or still lived. He wrote many books about gardens and gardening as well: e.g. *The Love of Roses*, Quiller Press 1990. But this newspaper denied all knowledge of him. They didn't know and couldn't (or wouldn't) trace him either. If they had been French they wouldn't have been more unhelpful. Publishers don't give out authors' addresses either. So, unfortunately, I was forced to give up on that one. Rose died in 1995 anyway. His obituary mentioned that he passed away in London, and that he had had a house near Carcassonne (11). Can the folly have survived? Even if we could find its whereabouts, it's bound to be private, but I thought I would mention it in this Appendix.-*Ed.*]

FOLLIES 12;4 (Winter 1992)

Mad Max's Hanging Gardens

JONATHAN HOLT

'The traveller sees in the distance a great mass of structures coloured in an inexplicable form and appearance' — Adolphus Trollope: *A Summer in Western France* (1841)

The employee of the state in France has often found himself with enough spare time on his hands to indulge his fantasies. The classic example in follydom is Ferdinand Cheval (1836-1924), the postman whose **Palais Idéal** has puzzled generations of visitors. Another was Henri Rousseau (1844-1910), not a customs officer, as popular belief has it, but a municipal employee levying local taxes, who painted some of the most striking art naif pictures.

Lesser known is Maximilien Siffait (*d.* 1861), a genuine customs officer who used his spare cash to create a child's wonderland that Alice would feel at home in. Situated some fifteen miles upstream from Nantes in the commune of Le Cellier [44], **Les Folies Siffait** overlook the Loire, fooling the navigator that they could have been some important bastion used to repulse any ravaging hordes that dared cross this great divide. Consisting of a series of terraces linked by staircases, some leading nowhere, and decorated with trompe l'oeil doors and classical facades, this is how Babylon's Hanging Gardens might have been. The difference is that Les Folies Siffait survive, and Babylon's do not, but their state is clearly a matter for concern. Abandoned and almost allowed to drift into an oblivion where none but the local people knew their location, the vegetation has encroached and covered them to the extent that only careful surveillance from the opposite bank of the Loire could reveal where they were situated.

Folies Siffait halfway up ©PRB

They have been described in guidebooks erroneously as 'the eccentricity of a rich owner', a 'gift made by a wealthy original to his mistress', a 'charitable objective intended by a good man to occupy the unemployed of the region' and 'a jetty for a hypothetical steamboat line'.

All these ideas are poppycock. Their authors might have been disappointed to discover that the creator of this little paradise was a man from Picardy who had been posted to the defunct department of Loire-Inferieure, now Loire Atlantique, in 1816. In about 1826, a few hundred metres from his new home 'La Gerardière' he was to start work on the project which was to occupy him for the next ten years of his life.

Why? We will never know, for Siffait remains a mystery, leaving no plans and few letters. He may not have reached the mythical status that Facteur Cheval has, but he evidently had the same energy, the same indifference to the taunts of those who ridiculed his folly and the same visionary genius for the spirit of a place. Step by step as one drops several hundred metres along a series of terraces propped up by high walls, one realises that here there is something quite unique, not only in follydom but also the history of building.

Formerly painted ochre, blue and grey, the daub has faded, the walls have crumbled, but here and there one can stand in turrets, try to gaze through trornpe l'oeil windows and fail to worship at a sham temple with merely a pediment facade. The porticos have gone and there remains but one pinkish belvedere which looks no further than three metres, being surrounded too much by trees. Narrow passages sometimes escape into majestic staircases which lead to nothing. This is Robin Hood's forest, a playground of

the imagination where one can shoot an arrow and see where it lands. But the Merry Men have fled and Maid Marion can no longer charm us, leaving the wilderness to creeping, encroaching, enveloping vegetation.

Fine esplanades which once looked far out over the Loire and beyond are now cluttered with sweet and horse chestnuts, limes, cypresses and cedars. Lilacs and laurels have pushed without the curbing, caring hands of any gardener. Ivy's stealthy hands touch stone after stone, dark green in the dim light which hardly penetrates.

In the nineteenth century the terraces were scattered with more exotica - Italian, English, Chinese and Arab buildings abounded, which evidently confused contemporary observers. The author of *'Voyage from Nantes to Angers by Steamboat'* asks: 'How will you explain to me the alliance of the Roman fortress and this sort of little oriental villa with its kiosks, its terraces and its garden in an amphitheatre style, its red, yellow or blue staircases?'

He ironically answered his own question: 'A lieutenant of Abderamane, prisoner of Charles Martel, after converting to Christianity, was well able to establish himself in this place and reproduce the dwellings of his country, or what is more probably, a lord of Le Cellier put up on his return from a crusade, a country house, such as he had seen in the Orient.'

The free-standing buildings have all disappeared. and in the absence of sufficient documentation, they would be impossible to replace, only recorded in the mind of the deceased Siffait, overladen with castles in the air.

The English artist John Turner also seems to have failed to record the terraces in painting when he was the guest of the Customs Officer of Le Cellier. He left a view of the nearby hill of Les Mauves but his undoubted visit to les Folies Siffait seems not to have inspired him.

Folies Siffait from tow-path and from top terrace ©PRB

The literature which guided the tourists along the watery artery of communication became more and more supercilious as the nineteenth century wore on. First Les Folies Siffait were a 'bizarre assemblage inspired consciously or not by the engravings of Piranesi or the utopias of Boullee and Ledoux.' Then their destiny was nothing but 'to amuse small children.' In 1839, they were 'an architectural error...an incomprehensible mixture.' By 1845, severe judgement was passed: 'an imbroglio without taste'. And then silence fell over the commentators, perhaps because the trees grew and this damnable folly was hidden from their critical eyes. In any case, Siffait left the region in order to pursue his career around Auxerre in Burgundy before coming back to die in Nantes in 1861. Meanwhile his son Oswald stayed behind to finish the work,

and as Mayor of Le Cellier, he battled for a long time to prevent the Nantes-Tours railway line from cutting through the site along the edge of Loire. Evidently a believer in the pastoral teachings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, he defended the site strongly: 'The path is not only a tow-path, it is the trunk route of the poor man. the trunk route of the pedestrians. You come to take away from the poor the only route which softens his way under his steps, which, through the proximity of the water, spreads some freshness on his brow burnt by the sun.'

It was no good. The garden was cut into two sections, although a tunnel was dug under the railway line, but now the piece next to the river betrays nothing of its curious past. Since then, the site has degenerated through neglect, perhaps because it is uncategorisable, with the result that no one knows quite what to do with it.

However, in the last dozen or so years, there have been stirrings in Loire-Atlantique; concern has gradually mounted about the fate of this abandoned dream. The commune of Le Cellier has obtained a twenty year licence from the Consort Drilhon, the present owners, and has drawn up a precise plan of the garden, with debris and offending vegetation marked. Gilles Clement, one of the creators of the Parc de Javel in Paris, is studying the course that this magical place could take, away from rampant nature towards a more controlled environment. 'It's going to cost us 10,000 francs a hole,' notes Philippe des Jamonières, the Mayor of Le Cellier and distant descendant of Maximilien Siffait soberly. The restoration could cost around 5 million francs, money which might come quicker once it is classified as a historic monument. The site has been 'protected' since 1942, and thanks to a dossier prepared by Des Jamonières and Jacqueline Guevenoux, inspector of sites at the regional directorate of architecture and the environment, its new status could he achieved.

In building grandly, maybe Siffait wanted the status of a king, or at least a noble like Olivier de Clisson whose gate tower, now ruined, once stood on this spot surveying the valley beneath. Although so many of his staircases took him nowhere on Earth, on the spiritual plane, he should be elevated to the Pantheon of Great Folly Builders.

Someone once asked: "What would you say of a man who would build fortress walls to protect nothing, apartments where one can't stay. A yellow terrace which has no other aim but to lead to a red terrace, a lilac chapel under the guard of a French grenadier? You obviously would say that this man has made a folly. Well, everyone has said it before you!'

I am indebted to Emmanuel de Roux of LE MONDE for information used in this article.

[This article originally had no pictures. We added some of ours. *Ed.*]

FOLLIES 15;4 (Autumn 1992)

The Désert de Retz Tour

GWYN HEADLEY

Good old yellow pages! people muttered darkly at me every time the coach turned right when it should have turned left. I should have claimed journalistic integrity and not revealed my sources earlier, when people cast their eyes to heaven and asked "Where did you find these guys?"

These guys were 'Arry and Dave, our coach drivers on the Désert de Retz tour. "It's a Mercedes," Harry answered brightly to my questions about the coach. Oh, that's all right then. A Mercedes it was indeed; but one long past its first youth. We should have been warned by the prominent sign as we boarded—" £40 FINE PAYABLE TO DRIVER FOR TRAVEL SICKNESS CAUSED BY ALCOHOL"— and the complete lack of luggage space. Be honest, Headley, you've rented a football coach, nagged the inner voice—and one more accustomed to the Millwall to Charlton run than London to Paris. This proved to be all too horribly true. Not only were 'Arry and Dave rabid Francophobes, they took the opportunity to get lost every time we started off. This first happened within seven seconds of leaving Mount View Road, when we turned north to the Channel ports rather than the more traditional south. I will try not to go into further details of the Coach Trip From Hell, only to mention that the thirteen hours it took us to reach Paris-Sèvres allowed us ample time to appreciate the 7½" of legroom provided.

But the hotel was comfortable, even though the architects in the group complained of its post-modernism, and Saturday was mild and sunny, and all our Folly Fellows from the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Ireland, Canada and Italy met us promptly in the hotel lobby as arranged. Fifty of us set off in convoy to the Désert and reached it on time, having got lost only once.

Folly Fellowship's visit to Désert de Retz, temple of Pan. ©PRB

We were met at the entrance gate by M. Olivier Choppin de Janvry, architect, owner and restorer of the proprieté—and representative of the Folly Fellowship in France. I have known him for five years, during which time he has never uttered a word of English. Our conversations have been rendered opaque by the fog of my schoolboy French. He drew me aside. "Will they understand French?" he whispered. "Most, but not all of them," I hissed. "You'll help with the translation then?" "Naturellement," I responded bravely. Choppin de Janvry then guided us around the Désert for an hour describing each detail of the park in his impeccable English, pausing only once to throw a *fronton* at me.

We arrived at the Colonne via a magnificent vegetable garden newly installed by the Societé. The exterior of the column has now been completely re-rendered, with the cracks and the widening chinks of the broken fabric diligently replicated. Inside the elegant open string spiral staircase in the core of the column has been recreated, and the french windows on the first storey have all been replaced. Another surprise awaited us here; Anne, Madame Choppin de Janvry, had set up a table and was dispensing welcome glasses of Kir to us all.

When I first saw an engraving of the Colonne Détruite I dismissed it either as an unbuilt architectural fantasy or, if built, then long vanished. No one seemed to have heard of it. No one knew where it was. From time to time I would come across another passing reference to it, and for me it became the most elusive of all follies. Then in the mid 1970s I was reading a map of the Paris suburbs (as one does) and just outside Chambourcy I noticed a small dot marked Ferme de Retz. For some reason I had always thought it to be in Brittany; shades of Bluebeard and Gilles de Retz. With no more information than that, I went to see for myself. I found myself at the gate to a thickly overgrown wood. The gate was heavily chained and padlocked; the gate piers were twelve feet high. It was festooned with notices: DÉFENSE D'ENTRER –

The Broken Column ©PRB

PROPRIETÉ PRIVÉ and other dire warnings. The gate stood in solitary magnificence, like the Maginot line; there was no wall or fence near it. So I walked round it, and into the Désert de Retz for the first time.

This was no desert. I had to slash my way through the undergrowth to make any progress. But finally, as you know, I came across the ruined column house. If I had a weak heart, it would probably have given out then. This was without doubt the most exciting folly discovery I had ever made. Of course, no one had ever seen this wonder before me—it was mine, all mine. It was a ruin of a ruin, in a terrible state, impossible to make out among the saplings and creeper and undergrowth, and even harder to photograph—luckily I had forgotten to bring a camera. It was the Racton Tower of France, but far, far finer.

It must have been late afternoon by the time I left. I had found the Pyramid—in a sorry state—the ruined chapel and the Temple of Pan. I knew nothing of these buildings. There may well have still been remnants of the Chinese House at that time, but I did not find them. Wandering in a daze back to the car, I was startled by a shout. The farmer had emerged from the Ferme de Retz, and was standing by my car. Trouble. I approached with trepidation. The snarl on his face metamorphosed into a grin as I neared him, and he shouted happily "You are English wiz a Citroën. I am French wiz a Rover!" This was hugely amusing, and his offer of a cup of tea (yes, tea) was accepted with some relief. In the farmhouse he had an engraving of the Désert which appeared to be contemporary: I cannot recall having seen it since.

Thereafter when opportunity took me to Paris I was a frequent if furtive visitor to the Désert. I introduced suitable French friends to it; one was fascinated by the Colonne Detruite, and almost as fascinated by the profusion of ceps and girolles. Then I heard it had fallen into the hands of developers. Patrick Taylor reassured me, and arranged for me to meet the architect. So it was that one February morning four years ago Yvonne Seeley and I were privileged to be shown round the park by Olivier Choppin de Janvry. We realised then that it would be in safe hands. He has transformed the place, meriting the plaudit given in another country and another century to Charles Talbot, 15th Earl of Shrewsbury: "He made the desert smile."

We returned via Versailles, where a majority of the coach party took the chance to disembark and investigate Le Hameau and Marie-Antoinette's dairy, and the following morning we left for Dunquerque, stopping for lunch in Ermenonville before walking round the Parc Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The Parc did not open until 2pm, so at midday we sat down for a leisurely French provincial Sunday lunch, organised through the kind competence of Shirley and Alan Day. The French and the British concepts of leisure differ: two hours later we were still waiting for the third of the five courses we had ordered. We had to leave at 3.30pm, so everyone dashed off to tour the park in the hour and a half left. A very large Madame promptly appeared to ask me (why me?) who was going to settle the bill. I was finally released with twenty minutes to spare, and my once flexible friend in a state of rigor mortis. Ah, the joys of a tour operator!

We made it home safely, despite 'Arry's final tour-de-force, a U-turn on the autoroute outside Dunquerque ten minutes before the ferry sailed. Did I mention his top speed was 45 mph? I said I wouldn't go into further details.

Annual membership of the Société Civile du Désert de Retz costs 100FF from 6 bis, Grande Rue, 78290 Croissy sur Seine, France

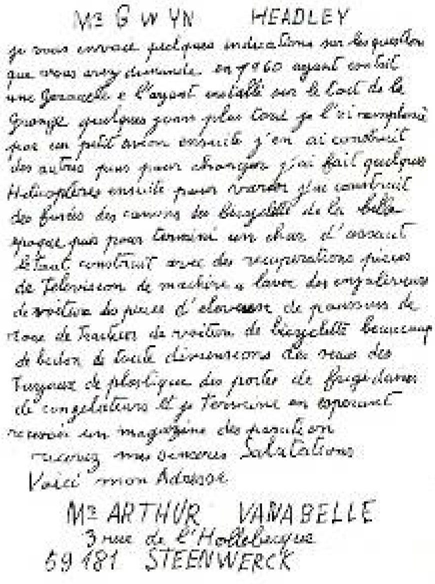
[This article originally had no pictures. We added some of ours. *Ed.*]

Follies 15;11 (Autumn 1992)

Lost and Found

France

In **Steenwerck** near Armentières in the Nord département is a spectacular military masterpiece of a *jardin imaginaire*, created over the past 33 years by M. Arthur Vanabelle. He writes: 'In 1960, having built a windscrew and having put it on the roof of the barn a few days later I replaced it with a little aeroplane then afterwards I built more then for a change I made some Helicopters then for variety I built rockets cannons bicycles From the belle époque and then to finish a tank all built from cast-off bits of television washing machines hub-caps chicken wire tractor car bicycle wheels lots of drums and cans of all sizes buckets plastic pipes refrigerator and freezer doors and I close hoping to see your magazine when it comes out.' This is a real and passionate work of kinetic art in red, white and green, best appreciated on a windy day.



[Arthur Vanabelle's original pictures are here replaced by our new pictures of 2008, ©PRB. *Ed.*]

Elizabeth A. Waters found a romantic water tower in **Portorson**, Manche. Any information gratefully received.

[On FiF;81 we stated that we were curious too. We have now been to Pontorson ourselves, but didn't find more than that the tourist information calls it a cistern. Perhaps the village authorities will answer our queries, and if so, we will report back.]

[News! When in 2011 I tried to find more about the Pessac rustic cement watertower in Joseph Monier's life story I was delighted to find that Pontorson's watertower (FiF;81 and *Follies* 15;11) was built on the same principles by the firm of Pierre Monier, the son of this pioneer of concrete cement, in the same period as his pavilion of Cambodia for the 1900 World Exhibition in Paris. It must be the same pavilion as is mentioned at Maulévrier (FiF;80).]

Pontorson cistern ©PRB

FOLLIES 15;15 (Autumn 1992)

Letters

You [Gwyn –*Ed*.] are right about trespassing—there were serried ranks of stop—no entry—private—keep out signs either side of the dirt track leading to the gate at the corner of the dark forest that was the Désert de Retz!

It was in the summer of 1962 that I was a naughty follyologist. The place itself was incredibly hard to find—no-one seemed to have heard of it—and of course the gate was barred. It was a matter of walking down the side of the forest and climbing over a barbed wire fence. Inside the trees were closely packed and covered with ivy and brambles. I skirted some rather unpleasant looking ponds and eventually reached a track leading up a slight hill, which I followed. There seemed to be no sight of any building, then suddenly I realised that there it was, the enormous truncated column—but barely discernible among the trees because it was completely shrouded with ivy. The effect from outside was sinister enough—the door was open and inside it was dark and squalid. The floor was covered in sacks—soaked in mud—the table covered in newspapers, unwashed plates and coffee pot and surrounded by an assortment of derelict chairs. Then a dog started to bark somewhere in the background—I could hear it straining at its chain. So I beat a quick retreat. I was beginning to feel rather scared by this time, imagining the possibility of an irate peasant with a shotgun; however I continued on until I came in sight of the Chinese Kiosk—a wonderful carved building but falling apart and covered in creeper. Just as I approached it a mass of birds—pheasants?—suddenly flew up from almost beneath my feet. The clamour of their wings gave me such a fright and what with that and the sinister atmosphere of the place that I got a move on back to the safety of my camper van and wife. Sorry I couldn't make the trip—will the atmosphere be as good now?

Peter Weaver

London SE26

FOLLIES 17;7 (Spring 1993)

Helen's Tower

PIETER BOOGAART

It must be very rare that one year one climbs a certain tower in one country and the next year one climbs the same tower in another country—the mind boggles at possible explanations. But this is what my wife and I did. In 1991 we climbed Helen's Tower in Ireland and in 1992 we climbed Helen's Tower in France.

The oldest of the two Helen's Towers is in Northern Ireland, 10 km north-east of Belfast. It was named for Helen Selina, Lady Dufferin, Countess of Gifford, who died of cancer in 1867, six years after the tower was completed, and was built by her son Frederick, First Marquis of Dufferin and Ava. The history of the tower and its builder is described in the biography of Lord Dufferin written by his nephew Harold Nicolson. The book is called...*Helen's Tower.*

Lord Dufferin's home was the Clandeboye estate in County Down. He improved on it a great deal. Nicolson says: "He dug the two vast lakes at Clandeboye; he constructed a fantastic folly in the shape of a two-and-a-half mile avenue connecting the demesne with Helen's Bay; in the hope of relieving unemployment." There was more, but let's just also mention the new chapel, inside tennis court and banqueting hall. Lord Dufferin also built off the estate. He rechristened Clandeboye Station Helen's Bay, and built and furnished a private waiting-room. Nicolson describes it as "the least successful room that 1 have ever known":

Having rested in the waiting-room, the visitor was then conducted back into the corridor and down a flight of steep stone steps which led to the level of the avenue. On reaching the bottom he was startled to find himself in a large pentagonal forecourt. The walls of this Propylaea were constructed of black granite irregularly morticed together with thick cement. There were a large number of turrets, pinnacles, barbicans, embrasures, machicoulis, ramparts, merlons, battlements, and arrow-slits. The avenue passed through this outer ward at right angles to the railway line. To the right there was a high portcullised gateway which led down to the sea. To the left an even more imposing feudal arch disguised the railway bridge. Each of these two arches was decorated with a large coat of arms - dexter, a lion with a tressure flory counterflory or, sinister a heraldic tiger ermine.

What a pity that we read this only after we had been at Helen's Bay! It sounds ideal for folly-hunters. Is anything left of all this beauty? Anyway, our main concern here is Helen's Tower. So it was built by Lord Dufferin in honour of his mother Lady Dufferin—between 1850 and 1861 by contractor Hugh Dickson of Newtownards (who had also worked on the nearby and better-known Scrabo Tower). There are three rooms on top of each other, furnished and sometimes exquisitely panelled. In ascending order one comes across a kitchen, a bedroom and a sitting-room. Above that is a roof bastion, containing a tiny bedroom. Detailed descriptions would lead us too far now, unfortunately, but the sitting-room is special in that on the walls are tablets with poems. One by Lady Dufferin herself (a birthday gift to her son, engraved in gold) and others by some of the people that Lord Dufferin had invited to be inspired. All in all nearly 20 people wrote poems connected with the tower. These were gathered together in a book printed for the occasion and called *The Book of Helen's Tower.*

Some of the best poems have been enshrined in the tower itself. The Duke of Argyll, Rudyard Kipling and Robert Browning are represented, but the best-known contribution is by Alfred Lord Tennyson, of which the first four lines are:

Helen's Tower here I stand
Dominant over sea and land
Son's love built me. and I hold
Mother's love engraved in gold

Later in life Lord Dufferin became connected with Mr Whitaker Wright and the downfall of the London and Globe Finance Corporation. The incidents connected with this unfortunate affair quite broke Dufferin and he died in 1902. Wright was the man who created Lea Park, Witley, and thus was responsible for Surrey's famous 'underwater ballroom'.

In 1914 countless young men were sent to Belgium and France, among them the 36th Ulster Division. Before they went to the Somme they had their training on the Clandeboye estate. Helen's Tower was one of the last things they saw in Ireland. When the war was over, donations from the people of Northern

Ireland made it possible to build a fitting memorial: a replica of Helen's Tower. It is still there near the river, at Thiepval between Bapaume and Albert. The room on the ground floor has a variation of Tennyson's lines on the walls:

Helen's Tower here I stand
Dominant over sea and land
Sons' love built me and I hold
Ulster's love in lettered gold

This second Helen's Tower, or Ulster Tower, is usually open in summer. When we got there the caretaker had just arrived with his groceries. "This is your lucky day. Come in!", he shouted jovially. I wish all towers were that easily accessible. Although we can't complain about the original in Northern Ireland either; the estate manager there was quite willing to show us round. The only thing was that he was in a bit of a hurry. For he was going to play a game of tennis with...the present Lady Dufferin.

Written with thanks to Dick Blakiston Houston.

Ulster Tower, Thiepval (80) ©PRB

Helen's Tower, Clandeboye, Ireland ©PRB

[2010: Unfortunately this article was originally published accidentally with a doublure of the Irish tower photograph, and none of the French version. Here you can now see the intended juxtaposition of the two.

On the internet we have seen recent pictures of Helen's Bay railway station and one gateway, so we believe that indeed they still exist.]

[2016: Helen's Tower is now in the care of the Irish Landmark Trust. It sleeps two.]

FOLLIES 21;15-17 (summer 1994)

Folly Etymology
[Etymological Article]

PIETER BOOGAART

Introduction

The question whether a certain object constitutes a folly or not often leads to discussions which are as enjoyable as they are hopeless. What might be helpful is a better understanding of the word 'folly'. It is up to the experts to decide what exactly is the meaning of the word nowadays - and what it is to be in the future. And the experts, ah well, that's us of course: the readers of this Magazine. It is worth some effort to try and establish - if possible once and for all - what the word has meant up to now. If that would be successful, it would be a valuable contribution towards finding workable definitions.

'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less.'

'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean so many different things.'

'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master - that's all.' *1)

We are the masters. And so it's up to us. And in order to be able to find suitable definitions for now and for the times to come we ought to ask ourselves: what was the past? What is the history of the word? Let's do some research.

English

When we want to find out about the history of a word we turn to dictionaries first. Naturally we restrict ourselves to 'folly' in the architectural sense. *2) What do word-books say?

As to the meaning of the word normal dictionaries will say something like:

'a building of strange or fanciful shape, that has no particular purpose, esp. as built only to be looked at' *3) or:

'a whimsical or extravagant structure built to serve as a conversation piece, lend interest to a view, commemorate a person or event, etc.: esp. found in England in the 18th century' *4).

But let's quickly proceed to etymological explanations.

There have been amateur attempts. There is an amusing little theory in a Dutch thesis, where folly is connected to an oldish Italian word *fola,* meaning (fairy-)tale *5). Charming, but if only for linguistic reasons it cannot be but faulty.

Average etymological dictionaries will say something like: "Folly. (F.-L.) M.E. *folye* - O.F. *folie,* folly" *6). So it's French - Latin. That was only to be expected and not much use. Neither is the information that the Old French *fol* is from the Latin "follis, bellows (hence a windbag)" *7).

More directly relevant is the following information from *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (on historical principles)*: 'Folly 5. A name given to any costly structure considered to have shown folly in the builder. (But cf. F. *folie, 'delight', 'favourite abode'*.) 1654' *8), meaning that the first time the word was used in this sense was in 1654.

The best information about the history of a word in the English language can be found not in an etymological dictionary, surprisingly, but in the normal *Oxford English Dictionary*. Entry number 5 of the word has the same formula as the previous book, although it was written down 56 years later: 'A popular name for any costly structure considered to have shown folly in the builder' and goes on to say the following:

R. Wendover says that when (in 1228) a castle which Hubert de Burgh had begun to build, near the Welsh border, had to be razed to the ground on account of a treaty concluded with the Welsh, much amusement was excited by the recollection that Hubert had given to the building on its foundation the name of Hubert's Folly (Stultitiam Huberti). It was remarked that he had shown himself a true prophet. Probably the word used by Hubert was F. folie; the original meaning seems to have been not stultitia, but 'delight', 'favourite abode'. Many houses in France still bear the name La Folie, and there is some evidence that 'the Folly' was as late as the nineteenth century used in some parts of England for a public pleasure-garden or the like.

The book goes on by giving a few examples, of which the following is the earliest:

'1654 WHITLOCK Zootomia 502 [He] buryeth it [his wealth] ... in Buildings needlesse, vain, or ill contrived, that stay but the finishing, and being called by his kind Gossip-neighbours his Folly' *9).

A few remarks here. Stultitia is classical Latin for foolishness. Roger de Wendover, who died in 1236, was a native of Wendover Buckinghamshire and chronicler and monk of St.Albans. He wrote in Latin. Hubert de Burgh was a typical medieval English knight, falling in and out of grace all the time. His vicissitudes make pleasant reading, 750 years later, sitting in a warm and welcoming city library.

Well, the year 1654 is explained now and there definitely is a French Connection. We'll have a look at French dictionaries later, but first let's look at what another group of English experts, the follyologists, have to say about the subject.

Barbara Jones to start off with, of course. But here we are disappointed. Although she tries to explain what follies are, she doesn't go into the origin of the word or former meanings. The nearest she gets to a historical viewpoint is in the following lines from the *Introduction*:

'Folly' on the map may also mean a leafy lane (*feuillée*) or a clump of trees on top of a hill (Berkshire) or a belt of trees round a barn (Wiltshire) or a footpath (Essex). There are a lot of Folly Farms in Southern England - 'It's always been called that, there's nothing else' *10).

Next in line to consider is the president of the Folly Fellowship. Gwyn Headley devotes a paragraph to the subject:

While the word 'folly' is taken to be a derivation of 'foolishness', a study of its etymology and history reveals some underlying meanings. Its direct ancestor is the Old French *folie*, *fol* meaning foolishness, and itself deriving from the Latin *follis*, meaning a ball, balloon or bellows. Another ancestor is *feuillée*, from the Latin *foliatus*, or foliage. In the English countryside this came to mean a copse on a hill - hence the great number of Folly Farms, which have nothing to do with our sort of folly - whereas on the Continent it had a more direct reference to building, denoting a hut made from the branches of trees. In 1337 the archives of the town of Alavard forbade the erection of '*foilliatas'* without the permission of the authorities, while in England the top of the hill just outside Faringdon in Oxfordshire has always been called 'The Folly', and is marked as such on the earliest Ordnance Survey maps; it wasn't until 1935 that somebody decided to build a folly-tower there *11).

Finally we have James Howley. In his *Introduction* to *The Follies and Garden Buildings of Ireland* he quotes a number of definitions from various people and dictionaries (including the story of Hubert de Burgh's castle on the Welsh border) and says:

Through all these definitions two main threads seem to emerge. One is associated with foolishness and miscalculation ... The second root of the word is associated with the French term *feuillée* which literally translated means leafy arbour. This source implies a more rustic approach, such as that employed in the creation of root houses and hermitages, which generally cost little to build. It has nothing to do with spectacle and ostentation but embraces nature in a more modest way. It is this latter group which is most closely associated with eighteenth-century theorizing into the origins of architecture through speculation on the form of the architypal building or primitive hut, raising a number of interesting associations which are unfortunately beyond the scope of this study *12).

Now let us get this straight and go into a few basics first, in order to avoid unnecessary confusion. What we are concerned with here are two separate words with two separate stems, but which unfortunately look alike. One stem is the Latin *folium*. It means: leaf of a plant. In modern English we have derivations like: foliage. Related to that word is *foliatus* (in various forms, like *foliata*) meaning: with leaves, or later: made with branches and leaves. From: leaf also came the meaning: page, which led to the derivation folio.

The other stem is the Latin *follis*, meaning something convex, such as bellows. In Late Latin the word developed the meaning: puffed cheeks, puffed up, wind-bag, and hence: fool. And that is how it came into Old French, *fol*, foolish and *folie*, foolishness. Old English doesn't know this word. It obviously crossed the Channel right after William the Conqueror and found a place in Middle English *13).

(Just to be wicked: from 1795 a fool's cap was used as design for a watermark for paper, originally of folio-size.)

French

It is high time that we turn to French dictionaries for succour, hoping that we will get an answer to the question: does the word folly (in the architectural sense in which we use it) come from 'foolishness' or from *'feuillée'*, or both?

The first book we open up immediately gives a date for what they consider to be the earliest occurrence:

'1185, dans des noms de lieu, La Folie, altér. probable de feuillée <abri de feuillages>, d'ou <cabane>. <>VX. Maison de Plaisance (le mot, au XVIIe - XVIIIe s. est rattaché à l'idée de <folle dépense>)' *14). So, for placenames, in the 17th-18th century we have the idea of extravagance (again), but before that time *folie* came from *feuillée*. At least, that is what is 'probable'. Not much help, really.

French dictionaries tend to stress the idea of extravagance in cost and the fun that people used to have in buildings that were designed for pleasurable purposes.

'Autrefois, se disait De maisons de plaisance construites d'une manière recherchée, bizarre, ou dans lesquelles on avait fait des dépenses excessives, et qui servait généralement à des parties de plaisir' *15).

Bizarre and extravagant, and generally used for parties. Parties? What sort of parties? We want to know more about this. Let's try and find out. And we're not willing to get fobbed off by remarks like: 'Well, you know the French.' We want to get to the bottom of this. However deep it may be.
Larousse's *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIXe Siècle* has the elaborate, frank and sordid details. Here is a short transcription.

Usually *folies* were just like second homes in the country, for pleasure. But in the previous (18th) century, Larousse says, a certain type of building came to be called *folie* that before that time had been known as *petite maison*. *Folie* was the better name however, both for the expense of the building and the frivolities that took place in them. At the time of Louis XIV, let's say around 1700, those who could afford it sought their amusement in the cabarets and taverns. All very fine, but restrained to a certain extent by public laws of course. Lots of people wanted more licence and licentiousness. After Louis XIV, in the *Régence*, the Duc d'Orléans initiated a trend that the French nobility fell over themselves to follow. He created a luxurious *folie* at Luxembourg, Paris, where there were no constraining rules. According to police reports the Duchess d'Orléans wished to have a park at her disposal where at all times people would be available 'to satisfy the insatiable desires of the Serene Highness'. By the end of Louis XV's reign (1774) everybody who was anybody had a *folie* and the spies from the local authorities couldn't keep track any longer. The police were interested, since by all accounts the activities that took place in the *folies* were of a highly exotic and erotic nature. A *folie* was a *temple de l'orgie*. Larousse devotes the equivalent of a few pages to an even longer police report that gives a description of one particular *folie*, belonging to the Baron de La Haye, in his garden near the Invalides in Paris. And adds: *Ab uno disce omnes* *16). Sheer luxury inside: the acme of sumptuousness. The various rooms had marble columns and vases, fountains and statues (a Laocoon-group in bronze e.g.), musical instruments (a golden grand piano), mosaic floors, rich draperies, paintings, king-size beds and bathrooms with every conceivable amenity. Stepping outside through the colonnaded porch one entered the garden which had an artificial river with lovely islands in it. Let's say: the picture is clear enough. The descriptions of what went on inside contains terms like *scandaleusement*, *nudité complète*, *monstrueux désirs* and *milles choses secrètes dont on ne sauvait parler sans rougir* *17). A thousand secrets that one can't talk about without blushing.

And there is another fascinating aspect: there were al fresco paintings by Julien de Toulon, and people like Antoine Watteau and François Boucher contributed to the interior of the building, which inspired Jules Romain to a number of sonnets. OK. Enough is sufficient. It's all very ..... French. And all the jokes about follies being related to the Folies Bergères are a lot closer to the mark than could be expected. Interesting country, France.

Toponyms

Back to the origins of the word folly. Or rather *folie*. It looks as if our etymological problem will turn into a toponymical problem. From what is true (Greek *etumos*) about words, we go to placenames (Greek *topos* and *onoma*: place and name). There are a number of toponymical dictionaries for our corner of the world. There is even one which specializes in placenames before the year 1226, which mentions *Folia* or *Folie* four times in the north-west France area, with references half in Latin, half in French *18). Quite understandably the Netherlands and Germany have little or nothing to offer *19), but Belgium of course is halfway France, or half-French. And yes, in part 4 of another dictionary we find more than 30 places called Folie in Belgium and Northern France: summerhouses, manor-houses, farms, domains and fiefs *20). There is also a Larousse dictionary that combines etymology and toponymy *21). It has the usual scanty information, but it also offers the theory of the Swede Michaëlsson that a *folie* could be an extremely poor patch of land that one would be a fool to try and cultivate: folly in the sense of foolish venture *22).

One last work on placenames should be included here. It not only deals with placenames as a whole, but also dissects them and analyses the component parts *23). About folly they say that this element in French placenames means 'foolishness' or 'foolish enterprise'. There is little clear evidence for the meaning 'house of pleasure' in English (in French it was crystal clear, as we have seen). The sense 'leafy bower' may be from French *feuillée* or may be from 'a position taken up by a shooter of game' *24). *Feuillée* must be responsible for dialect meanings like 'clump of trees on the top of a hill or on open ground' *25).

The French dictionary that gives the best information about etymology in general is *Trésor de la Langue Française.* They begin by giving the year 1185 for the toponym *La Folie* and go on to say that people have often given the name *folie* to too costly or extravagant houses. But they are not entirely sure. The explanation is preceded by the word 'prob.'. 'Prob.', they say, it's from *feuillée*, which originally meant <*abri de feuillage; petite maison, cabane*>, but developed into <*maison de campagne*>, and popular etymology, which had always associated it with foolishness, justified the term by connecting it with some '*construction dispendieuse ou extravagante*' *26). 'Prob.'. Everything 'prob.'.

Breakthrough

Fortunately we can go one step further, for this last book in this respect not only mentions Michaëlsson's theory but also, more to the point, cites the *Dictionnaire Topographique de la France*, as it is quoted in an academic magazine which is all about French linguistics. And here at last is a really exciting discovery. In 1936 Sir Allen Mawer contributed 7 pages under the title '*La Folie* in Place-names' *27). Mawer was a toponymical expert, connected with the English Place-Name Society and writer of a few books on placenames *28). And his evidence is entirely convincing. No 'prob.' about it.

Mawer begins his article by mentioning the various ways in which the word folly is used on the maps of England and points out that there are only two instances in literature from medieval times. The first is the famous case of Hubert de Burgh. A second early example of folly in an English placename had only recently come to light: Foliejon in Windsor Forest, called Foliejon and Folye Jon in 1315 *29) and again Folie Johan in 1318 *30). The correct interpretation must be: the folly of John, in this case John de Drokenesford, the ambitious and extravagant Bishop of Bath and Wells at the time.

It should be borne in mind that in Middle English *folye* was a normal spelling of the word. Chaucer e.g. used it a lot, also in the sense of 'silly thing'. But let's not get too excited here. The most elaborate *Middle English Dictionary* gives four basic meanings of the word folly in close to 100 instances *31). Unfortunately, careful study of all these cases reveals that only one or two of them can be construed as denoting a building. Nevertheless, what we have just seen is certainly the first appearance in the English language of the word folly to describe a building. There can be no doubt that the word is English. We even have 'negative' proof: the name is missing in the *Orbis Latinus*, which is a German geographical Lexicon that gives all known Latin placenames from the Middle Ages onwards *32), and does so with German thoroughness.

So 1315 it is. Contrary to earlier statements here and there, also in *FOLLIES* Magazine.

Back to our academic dispute. In his *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française* R. Littré had suggested that *folie* for buildings might be connected with *feuillée*. What Mawer doesn't mention is that Littré was being very cautious. He said that for the etymology of the word *folie* one normally thought of
the meaning 'foolishness'. But because of two short passages from medieval Latin (later efficiently refuted by Mawer himself) Littré found that *douteux* and *a soupçon naît qu'on a là une altération du mot feuillie ou feuillée* *33). A suspicion arises: tentatively put, but, sure enough, the theory found a champion: the Dane Nyrop supported it *34). His evidence however is not complete and far from conclusive. Mawer quickly dismisses it. Then he compares the various forms that the two words (with their two different stems) have had through the ages. First he looks at all cases of *folie* in the *Dictionnaire Topographique*, which gives placenames, but also names of rivers, hills, castles, farms etc. in France. There are 64 cases where a particular place which bears the name *folie* at present had earlier forms of that same name in French or even Latin texts. The various forms in which that name has appeared through the centuries are compared. All the earliest vernacular forms show *folie*, *follie* or *folia*. From the same topographic dictionary he then quotes 13 cases of *feuillee*, *feuillie* or *feuille* which have survived in modern French after having been mentioned in earlier texts. There are only one or two instances where a form of the word from the one stem *folie* is spelled the same as a form of the word from the other stem *feuillee.* So it appears that there is hardly any confusion, and where there is, it is at a quite late date.

1. It is no use speculating on the possibility that the confusion may in some cases even be a deliberate play on words.
2. The earliest references in France are *Folia* in 1028 and *loculus stultitiae* (little place of foolishness) in 1080.

3. In earliest French we see the same direct translation that we have seen in English from the Latin *stultitia* *35), so there is no room for coincidence here.

4. The French meaning of 'delight', 'favourite abode' in itself must be derived from the original way of denoting a 'foolish' building: *folie* is *stultitia,* the building provides pleasure.

Dictionary editors are cautious people. They have to be. While an argument is going on they tend to sit back and await the outcome first. And in the mean time they use the word 'maybe' or 'prob.'. After some time a fresh look at all the available data may lead to a new valuation.

In conclusion

It appears that there is no justification for the suggestion that the indication folly for a building goes back to Latin *foliata*, French *feuillée*, meaning 'with leaves', in the majority of cases, as Nyrop would have us believe. On the contrary. *Folie* in France and Folly in England, used for placenames, have from the earliest occurrences onwards meant something like foolishness.

But we must beware of swinging to the opposite extreme. For there has indeed been some confusion somewhere on the way. It would be extremely difficult to explain certain exceptional meanings of the word folly in English without a French source or parallel. Notably folly where it means something 'woody' like a coppice or a belt of trees. But the evidence that Mawer gives of this possibility, based on a book about hunting, is very flimsy indeed. The **toponymical** confusion may largely be a British rather than a French phenomenon. And that wouldn't be all that surprising either. When have the British not jumped at the opportunity to be confused by the French? Further research into English placenames will probably provide the answer to this particular problem. The **etymological** confusion was started by a Frenchman and furthered by some Scandinavians. It took an Englishman to put us on our feet again.

We have come to the end of our excursion. We have seen fascinating developments in 18th century France and have gone back far into the Middle Ages. And we have come up with a few interesting facts and some conclusions, the major ones being the following.

The word folly has from time almost immemorial denoted a building that was strictly speaking unnecessary, useless, therefore extravagant in itself and showing a certain amount of foolishness or fun in the builder. The first time it was used in English in this way was in 1315.

Historically speaking then, the OED definition is the best one after all *36). There may be few English people who would have doubted that in the first place. 'A popular name for any costly structure considered to have shown folly in the builder'.

But we'll but a few last buts. The word folly to denote a building has never been really 'popular': even after the Folly Fellowship's first Lustrum. If 'popular' is supposed to indicate that the name is given by other people, not the builder/owner, we must disagree. For a name to be given and survive the owner must have been proud to call his building foolishness or favourite abode: these names were official. And 'costly' would usually exclude the sort of spontaneous amateur architecture that provides us with so many delightful and cheap follies.

All in all it may be wiser to stick to 'an architectural structure that shows folly in the builder'. Or something like: 'a building whose primary function is to please'.

As for the future of the word folly: that is uncertain. There are a number of developments visible to the discerning eye that herald changes that may not always be too welcome. It may be time for a **Neological Article**, to deal with new words or new meanings of words.

It probably is. Prob.

1. Lewis Carroll: *Through the Looking-glass*, The Works of Lewis Carroll, Hamlyn 1965 p.174.
2. For the less specialised meaning of the word: 'act of a fool' etc., this article will consistently use the word 'foolishness', to avoid all confusion.
3. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, London 1978.
4. *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, New York 1987.
5. Yvonne Kradolfer: *'The Folly' -De Britse Traditie*, Utrecht 1991
6. *A Concise Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, Oxford 1965.
7. Eric Partridge: *Origins (A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English)*, London 1958.
8. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (on historical principles)*, Vol. I, Oxford 1933.
9. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol.VI, Oxford 1989.
10. Barbara Jones: *Follies and Grottoes*, London 1974, p.4.
11. Gwyn Headley/Wim Meulenkamp: *Follies, a National Trust Guide*, London 1986, p.xxii.
12. James Howley: *The Follies and Garden Buildings of Ireland*, London 1993, pp. 2-3.

13. To most people Shakespeare's English (±1600) e.g. is 'Old English'. Linguistically speaking it isn't. Old English is up to 1150, Middle English ends after Chaucer, around 1500; so Shakespeare is Modern English.
14. *Le Grand Robert de la Langue Française*, tome IV, Paris 1985.
15. *Dictionnaire Français Illustré et Encyclopédie Universelle*, tome I, Paris 1881
16. "from one learn all", one example is sufficient to get to know them all.
17. Larousse: *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX Siècle*, tome VIII, Paris 1872.
18. M. Gysseling: *Toponymisch Woordenboek van België, Nederland, Luxemburg, Noord-Frankrijk en West-Duitsland (vóór 1226)*, dl I, Brussel 1960.
19. While *folie* is Romance (i.e. derived from Latin), German and Dutch are Germanic languages. So is English, but after 1066 English was greatly influenced by early French, especially in the higher classes.
20. K. de Flou: *Woordenboek der Toponymie van Westelijk Vlaanderen, Vlaams Artesië, het Land van den Hoek, de graafschappen Guines en Boulogne, en een gedeelte van het graafschap Ponthieu*, vierde deel, Brugge 1924
21. A. Dauzat & Ch. Rostaing: *Dictionnaire Étymologique des Noms de Lieux en France*, Paris 1963.
22. This must be the article by K. Michaëlsson: *Franskt La Folie - svensk Fåfängan. Namn och Bygd. Särtryck*, 1937, pp.130-173.
23. A.H. Smith: *English Place-name Elements*, ENGLISH PLACE-NAME SOCIETY, Volume XXV, Cambridge 1956.
24. Picture an inconspicuous wooden hut where the intrepid hunter could hide long enough for an animal to dare get close and be shot promptly.
25. Quite probably the writer of this section of the book was (influenced by) Allen Mawer, whom we shall see more of later on.
26. *Trésor de la Langue Française*, tome VIII, Paris 1980.
27. A. Mawer: ***La Folie*** *in Place-names*, ROMANIA 1936, t. 62, pp.378-385.
28. e.g. *The Chief Elements used in English Place-Names*, Cambridge 1925, and *Problems of Place-Name Study*, Cambridge 1929.
29. *Calendar of Patent Rolls* s.a.
30. *Calendar of Close Rolls* s.a.
31. H. Kurath ed.: *Middle English Dictionary*, Michigan 1952, vol.3, pp.681-2.
32. *Orbis Latinus, Lexicon lateinischer geografischer Namen des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit*, band II, Braunschweig 1972.
33. R. Littré: *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française*, Paris 1863.
34. K. Nyrop: *Études de Grammaire Française*, pp.21-29, Kopenhagen 1919.
35. Or *Stultissia*, as the translation for a fief in Ablainzevelle had it in 1270 - *Woordenboek der Toponymie* op. cit..
36. *Oxford English Dictionary*, op. cit.

FOLLIES 23;15 (winter 1994)

Some Follies and Garden Buildings in France

PETER DANE

On holiday in France I managed to persuade everyone that an outing to the Pagode de Chanteloupe near Amhoise was essential if I was not to exhibit folly withdrawal symptoms. All conceded it was a worthwhile diversion.

In our journeying we encountered several other architecturally interesting and unusual structures which are, I suggest, additions to the listing in *FOLLIES* #2, p. 14. Regrettably, my limited French did not permit me to make further enquiries or seek further information in the localities.

DORDOGNE 24

24/1 MOULEYDIER Tower

Circular, currently floor- and roofless. On private land. Situated to the east of Mouleydier, approximately 200m north of the D660 behind the Garage Payet, on the hillside at the edge of the Forêt de Maine. A small road, opposite St. Cyboards' Church, passes under the railway line and provides a closer view.

Left: 1994 ©Peter Dane

Right: 2010 ©PRB

24/2 TREMOLAT Model Château

A delightful stone-built miniature château, in the front garden of the house of an estate agent, next to the Post Office in the main street.

[Originally without picture, but Peter Dane's photograph is now on FiF;51.-*Ed.*]

LOIR-ET-CHER 41

41/1 ROMORANTIN-LANTHENAY Pagoda.

Three storeys, with external metal spiral staircase, in the public gardens adjacent to the Hôtel de Ville. The gardens also contain a fairly recent small wooden Swiss style summmerhouse/chalet and a tunnel, under the road. which has parts of the entrance arches decorated with rocks to provide a grotto effect.

[Originally with Peter's photograph. New picture by PRB on FiF;75.-*Ed.*]

41/2 MONTEAUX

Dovecote, Banqueting House & Watermill – all in the gardens of Ste. de la Terre de Monteaux, Rue de la Vallée. The dovecote, circular with bell shaped roof, adjoins the boundary wall, adjacent to the road (D65) from Mesland to Monteaux. Close by, just visible above the wall is the balustrade of the banqueting house, accessible through a gateway, near which is also the watermill, in oriental style.

[Originally illustrated with views of the Banqueting House and the Watermill, but as they seemed unretrievable we used another view of the Watermill on FiF;74, and a recovered picture of the dove-cote here, both by Peter Dane.-*Ed.*]

Monteau dovecote ©Peter Dane

LOIRET 45

45/2 BEAUGENCY Summerhouse

Square, atop a retaining wall. In the public gardens, next to the swimming pool, on the bank of and overlooking the river Loire. *(Andrew Plumridge believes this may be a Merchants' Tea House, which he suggests are fairly common in France.)*

[Unpublished photograph by Peter Dane now added here.-*Ed.*]

Beaugency summerhouse ©Peter Dane

45/3 GUIGNES Tower [erroneously put by Peter in 45 Loiret – Guignes is in 77 Seine-et-Marne.-*Ed.*]

Circular, with crenellations, adjoining stable block. Adjacent to the minor road from Lestiou to Tavers, in the grounds of the Château de Guignes.

Guignes (77) tower ©Peter Dane

FOLLIES 24;5-10 (spring 1995)

Île-de-France

PIETER BOOGAART

Andrew Plumridge rang us up and said he would like to go and have a look at some follies in the Paris area. Did we think we would enjoy that too? And hadn't we better all go together then? Well, yes. And we decided to make use of Rita's mid-term break near the end of October. It seemed logistically logical for us to go by car and for Andrew to come by plane.

Rita and I had been to Paris a fair number of times and had seen things like the Désert de Retz, Chantilly, Ermenonville (twice), Parc Monceau and all the royal parks, while Andrew had just about seen the Eiffel Tower 15 years ago, so we were way ahead of him. That's why we wanted to concentrate on the less obvious locations, which would be of more interest to all of us. What we also planned into our itinerary was a couple of the New Towns round Paris, which are salubrious to our various roles: Andrew is an architect, Rita an art historian and I'm the chauffeur. And the reporter. This report by the way tends to take the bird's-eye view and not every scrap of available information is given. Sometimes we just couldn't find all the details and cameo studies are recommended. It is high time for a French version of the Folly Fellowship.

Nevertheless, we tried to prepare ourselves as meticulously as possible. We studied *From Folly to Follies* by Saudan & Saudan-Skira. *Der Landschaftsgarten* by Von Buttlar and *Fantastic Architecture* by Elffers & Schuyt. We flicked through other books and read articles and brochures. We bought new maps. We prayed for sunshine and threw wellies into the boot of the car. Plus our oversized rainbow umbrella. And off we went.

Some other time I may be allowed to explain why Rita and I wanted to take two days to get to Paris [75]. Suffice it to say that Andrew was there ahead of us and had ample opportunity to do whatever it is young men do when they are out in the big city and on their own. He later told us that he had been to see La Défense. Isn't that what they all say. Anyway, when we duly collected him at his hotel on Monday morning he had sore feet but was ready for our tour, which was to take us round Paris and end on Saturday at Charles de Gaulle airport. Clockwise. No use going widdershins.

While still inside the Boulevard Périphérique we drove to the **Parc des Buttes Chaumont**, where in 1864 Haussmann's first man Alphand massed part natural, part artificial rocks 50 m. high on an island. He crowned it with a little **rotunda** called La Sybille, after a Tivoli model. We had seen pictures of it beforehand and now the disappointing bit about it was the restricted view from the top: Montmartre in the distance, but very little of interest besides. New to us about the park was the impression the **grotto** makes. It's 20 m high, but through a gap in the roof the water can be seen coming down from 30 m. Why hadn't Vernon Gibberd sung its praises yet? We decided he didn't know about it and took some pictures for him.

The **Bois de Vincennes** has one corner with a Tropical Garden. Behind a Chinese gate we found a very tranquil area with a newly rebuilt far-eastern temple and a stupa reminiscent of Angkor Wat. In a street opposite that entrance to the park Andrew noticed a rustic temple behind a high wall. Very little escapes the man.

Among other things the Bois de Vincennes features a hybrid obelisk called pyramid and a circular temple on a grotto on an island in the Lac Daumesnil. The restaurant behind it was highly upmarket in the usual sense of needlessly expensive. After one *sandwich* we felt we had to leave Paris quickly.

For those who have never seen anything of the New Towns round Paris we can heartily recommend **Ricardo Bofill**'s Espaces d'Abraxas, council estates in the shape of a Roman theatre, a triumphal arch and a palace. Or Les Arènes de Picasso by **Nunez**, all in **Noisy-le-Grand** [93], Marne-la-Vallée. Controversial architecture for various reasons, and if that sort of thing were executed on a smaller scale (say, one house in the shape of an arc de triomphe) lots of people would call it a folly. The most straightforward follylike object in that area is in **Luzard** [77]. In the middle of the roundabout Quatre Pavés a **watertower** [from 1973, by Portzamparc] is clothed in trellises,

10-sided, with plants growing all round, looking for all the world like a Tower of Babel. Curio architecture, to say the least.

Fifty Km east of Paris, south-west of Coulommiers [77], we found the village of **Mauperthuis** - the name may sound familiar from the *Roman de Renart* in medieval literature. Here **Monsieur de Montesquiou**, Seigneur de Mauperthuis, had his estate over 200 years ago. The house used to be near where the fountain and the dovecote are now, in the village. In the grounds, in the direction of the **obelisk** and close to where the new house is now, were all sorts of buildings. Useful ones, like a rustic washhouse, a fine guardhouse and a fanning mill, but also more surprising ones like a **grotto**, a **mock fort** and a **tomb** (for Coligny). But the pièce de resistance here is the **sham ruined pyramid**. The famous Ledoux submitted his design for it to the Academy of Architecture (he was admitted in 1773). This design proved too expensive to build and must have been stupendous, since the simpler version that did get built is extraordinary enough. More than halfway up behind it runs the road to the village. The middle part of the front is cut vertically into its own slope, with a stone arch over four pillars. There is a spacious room inside. Since the pyramid was designed to look ruinous it is difficult to make out how solid it is now, after 200 years. As a folly it is of major importance. Architect Ledoux was so grateful for Montesquiou's support that he later designed a Utopian village for Mauperthuis, with houses in the shape of huge balls and Greek classical temples and the like.

Further south-west near Ronay-en-Brie is **Nesles-la-Gilberde** [77]. Here the former gendarme **Gaston Gatinet** built a **house** in the category fantastic architecture. It seems that he originally planned to have a view of the Eiffel Tower from there, 50 km away. But that cannot have worked out. What is left is charming enough, with its indoor theatre and swimming-pool, its funny windows and its decorations. Born in the previous century, Gatinet died a few years ago, leaving his work unfinished. He didn't want his full name to be known, probably since he had never asked planning permission for his house. He used to be called Monsieur G. His nicest self-portrait is round the left-hand side. He must have been a happy man. The house has been sold in the mean time to someone who is also hesitant to give his name for some reason, and no-one knows what is going to happen to it. S'il vous plait, monsieur, don't pull it down, but finish it in style.

On our way to Vaux-le-Vicomte Andrew noticed an old airplane that had been turned into an expensive restaurant [Fontenay-Trésigny 77]. Didn't I tell you - very little escapes the man. Now I know you are not supposed lo call an airplane-turned-restaurant a folly, but what DO you call it? A restaurant. A curio. A curio restaurant. OK?

Nicolas Fouquet was Chancellor of the Exchequer to Louis XIV. When he wanted a palace for himself he made **Vaux-le-Vicomte** [77] so sumptuous that the Sun King (injudiciously invited to the housewarming party) got jealous and promptly threw Fouquet in gaol for life. You must have done something bad if you are that rich. The garden has little to offer for the follyologist.

Stylish, classical French, it's lovely in its way, the best thing in the distance being the huge eyecatcher, a gilded statue of Hercules, reminiscent of Wilhelmshöhe and clearly visible in the cleavage of the trees - as Rita memorably puts it.

Similarly, **Fontainebleau** [77]is impressive as a historic garden. We liked the grotto and the pavilion in the lake, but on the whole there is little for this magazine. North of the town however we found an attractive little belvedere tower in fairy-tale style, the Tour Dénécourt, in the middle of the extensive woods.

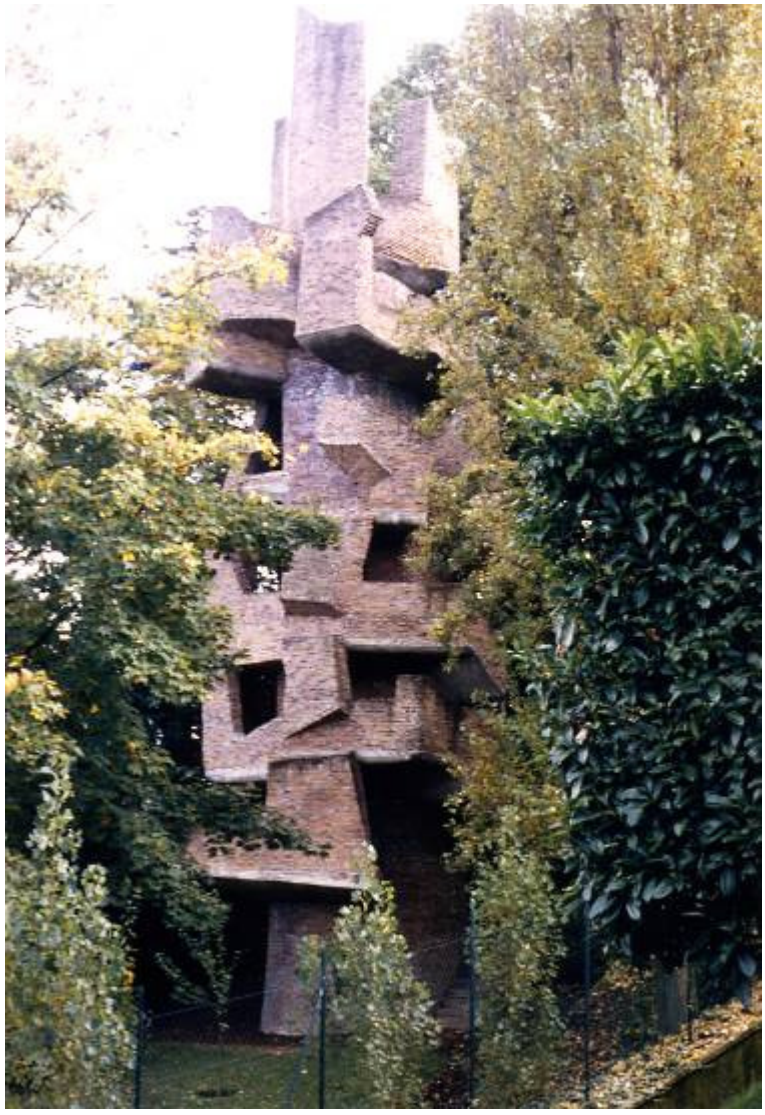
At 50 Km south of Paris **Milly-la-Forêt** [91]looked like a very pleasant little town. Leaving it in a westerly direction we followed the signs for something we had seen classified as 'fantastic architecture'. The fact that Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely had worked on it led us to believe that it was a sculpture rather than something architectural. This was vindicated when we actually saw it. It's huge alright, this monster in the woods, **Le Monstre dans la Forêt**. In principle it's only a head with a brilliant mirror-mosaic front, but among other things it has got a railway carriage up there at a height of 10 m and a 'suicide balcony'. If it's up to Andrew and me: definitely a sculpture. And a curio. Not a folly.

The history of the **Parc de Jeurre**, north of **Étampes** [91], is well-known. A number of garden buildings, good ones too, have come from elsewhere, mostly from Méréville. The **temple** at the end of the lake behind the house has always been only a front here. It used to be the front of the dairy at Méréville, but after its removal from there an aviary was added to the back, thus obstructing the view of some fine reliefs there. The **Temple** of Love is a replica of a Tivoli rotunda. The fine dovecote is a genuine medieval tower. Among the minor features is the **Cenotaph** for Captain Cook (it's not a tomb - he was eaten by cannibals). It bears a remarkable inscription to the effect that the cenotaph was erected here since his own country was too ungrateful to honour him properly.

Rita and I had known about the **Maison Picassiette** in **Chartres** [28] for some years, but we had never actually seen it. It is a folly by Raymond Isidore, who in the forties and fifties went round gathering shards and shells and broken bottles and anything he could lay his hands on in order use them as decoration and building materials. He started inside, went on to the walls outside, built a chapel and a summerhouse and bought the adjacent piece of land for a second courtyard and other buildings and sculptures. Once he had started there was no stopping him. Rumour has it that his wife wasn't very pleased when he began to cement his mosaics on top of the chairs, the bed, the stove, the sewing machine, the candlesticks etcetera. But eventually she learned to live with it. She had to. She must have been lucky to escape being mosaicked herself. Isidore went on until he died in 1964. His favourite material was broken plates (Picassiette could mean plate-stealer as well as Picasso of the plates) and his favourite subject was religion. Primitive art, innocent art, *art brut*, *art insolite*. whatever it is called, it is indubitably a great folly, this Maison Picassiette.

We are pleased to report that both the Queen's Dairy and the Sea Shell Cottage in the English garden at **Rambouillet** [78] have been cleaned and restored. They look splendid now. I don't think people usually pay attention to the grotto in the park there. Well ... they are right, it was a lot more attractive when the little Chinese pavilion was still on top of it, as we saw in an old print. The guide we met in the *Laiterie de la Reine* told us that there used to be an underground tunnel from the shell cottage to this grotto, for lovers, hence the name *Grotto d'Amour*. Since this guide, Annie Clouet, has enthusiastically joined our Fellowship, it might be a good idea for her to tell us more about it all.

St-Quentin-en-Yvelines [78] has a few objects among its modern architecture that some people might call follies. [At the entrance of a disco in the town centre we noticed the striking combination of a very steep **pyramid** and a round ventilating tower. Romanet and Zublena were responsible, apparently. They were in our report in 1995.] And there is what looks like four little temple fronts back to back. But we should perhaps prefer to think of them as decor or street furniture rather than sculpture or folly. The latter one fits in very well with the **Bofill** flats that resemble a palace complex and are officially called **Les Arcades du Lac** and commonly known as 'Versailles for the people'. Part of this complex stretches out into a large rectangular lake, much like the famous Chenonceau castle, and is complemented on the other side by the 'temple et templettes', reflected in the water. What looks like two storeys is in fact four storeys high. This was the second of the New Towns that we saw. If they sound intriguing, there is a good reason for that: they are.



Closer to Paris at **Meudon** [92] we looked up Andre Bloc's house and belvedere tower. They are in the grounds of a private villa, but round the back one can get a good look at least of the tower. It looks like a jumble of blocks, but only consists of small flights of half-fortified quirky steps and is made of brick. The house just looks whitewashed and is a piece of highly individual architecture. Unfortunately, the owners of the villa were at work and couldn't be reached, so we didn't get a chance to view the inside. Why do people have to work? Why can't they be available? On poor holidaymakers like us it's just unfair!

At nearby **Issy-les-Moulineaux** [92] an island in the Seine boasts another **lookout tower**. But this time it is a work of art. 'La Tour aux Figures' by Jean Dubuffet. Its height is 24 m. and in summer you can sometimes get inside and climb it. Seeing a black-and-white picture of it would be seeing less than half. The brilliant colours are essential for this monumental work of art. Was it meant as a belvedere tower? In that case it would fall within the broadest definitions of the word folly.

I'm afraid we have sad news for those who know of Marcel Landreau's 'moving garden' with cathedrals etc. in Mantes. The garden has been obliterated and nothing is left. **Mantes-la-Jolie** [78] is just that bit less jolie. How disrespectful of them. Could we have the jolie bit of the name formally and officially removed please?

Nicolas Fouquet's predecessor as Chancellor of the Exchequer under Louis XIII, appropriately named Claude de Bullion, built a **grotto** in an Italian style at **Wideville** [78], 30 km west of the Eiffel Tower. Surprising is not that it is magnificent and beautifully located in the private garden of the Château Wideville. Surprising is that it is so early: the 1630s. And surprising is that we got a chance to see it,

thanks to some shameless bribery and flattery on my part. If Andrew had been able to follow it all he would have flatly refused to see the thing. The inside is brilliantly decorated with paintings, stucco, rock incrustations and a wealth of shells, richer even than Rambouillet. The château is for sale, by the way. A couple of million pounds should do the trick.

Cergy-Pontoise was the last of the New Towns we went to. The St-Christophe area again has an impressive complex by **Bofill**, called Belvedere. It consists of two blocks of shops and a huge semi-circle of council flats, Les Colonnades, 6 storeys high, and in the middle of it a tower called **Obelisk** or **Belvedere Saint Christophe** leans over slightly but deliberately towards the Arc de Triomphe, suggesting a connection. Climbing the 219 (?) steps (I think it was) up to the top gives an excellent view of a number of other architectural features.

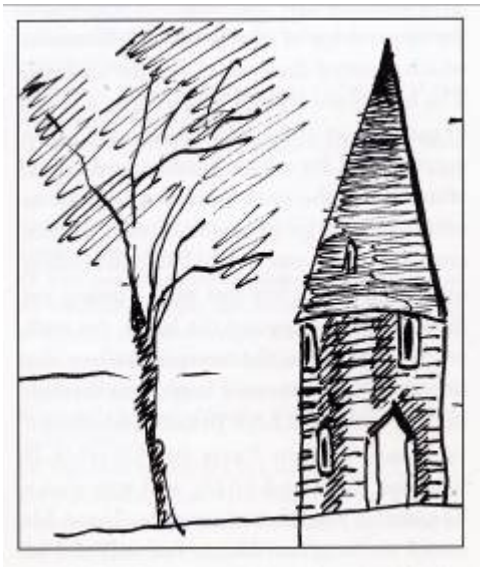
While we were waiting for a miracle to happen (viz. the opening of the gate to Wideville) Andrew idly picked up a leaflet in the local post office. It was about the town of **Marly-le-Roi**, which apparently has inspired lots of artists. Writers lived there too. And in 1844, it said, after the success of The Three Musketeers Alexandre Dumas built le Château de Monte Cristo up on a bluff above the Seine. And there was a picture of a little folly besides. All this tantalising information on a leaflet which Andrew happened to pick up. Very little escapes the man. Of course we went and investigated. Dumas had built the castle in order to be able to work somewhere quiet. An English landscape garden was laid out with little tunnels and grottoes on different levels. He was extremely pleased with the result, but he defeated his purpose. The château was so beautiful, in particular the Moorish rooms, that people kept coming to see it. In order to escape them again he built another little château in the garden of his château and pulled up the drawbridge behind himself. This is the **Château d'If**. It is still there and it is exceptionally pretty. Surrounded by a moat, two stories high, with a balcony and a tower, the rear half-timbered. It is extensively decorated and has a slender, elegant appearance. A more detailed cameo study might provide further particulars about the book titles inscribed on the walls, the style, the when, the who etcetera.

Well, that was it, really, our Tour of Île de France. Actually there was more. but most of that is hardly newsworthy, folly-wise, however memorable it was to us.

There was one thing e.g. that had managed to escape Andrew. One of our days together was Rita's birthday. When he found out over dinner he recouped by promptly ordering a bottle of champagne and a birthday cake. Other pleasurable events happened. We just missed seeing Euro Disney. Great. We did see Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye. Great, but it started raining. We were privileged again in getting a guided tour round the Désert de Retz by Olivier Choppin de Janvry. (It's difficult to see progress after two years, by the way.) And it was raining. We saw another of Olivier's projects: the Chinese Pagoda at **I'lsle-Adam**. And it kept raining. Finally we drove on to the airport in time to put Andrew on the plane. The holiday was over. Four rainy hours later we were all back home in England and in The Netherlands. With just a few questions remaining. One was: why hadn't we been able to find an equal to the nice little hotel we stayed at the first night? Another: did Andrew lose most of his francophobia? Another again: can we use the word 'curio' to describe something close to a folly? And another: why did most of the places we visited have double names? And another: why didn't Napoleon teach the French the meaning of the words obelisk and pyramid? And yet another question was: who is going to write a report? We argued a bit about that one. You know who lost again.

FOLLIES 25;12 (summer 1995)
Lost and Found

FRANCE



The attached sketch is of a folly glimpsed a couple of years ago in France, about one step in seven league boots from Le Havre [76]. Our correspondent suspects that it is a **wizard's house**; the roof obviously designed to accommodate the hat! It may of course be just a wayside spell-casting booth for use when travelling, although whether the tree next to it is suitable for tethering broomsticks to we are not sure. Perhaps other members know more about these sort of buildings, or have been able to investigate this particular one. Constructed of brick and stone, or two different colours of stone in stripes similar to Rushton triangular lodge. Perhaps the designer was a 'chum' of Thomas Tresham. Please let us know if anyone finds out anything about it.

FOLLIES 27;15 (winter 1995)
Letters
Lost in France

Enclosed are two photographs taken in Honfleur [14], near Le Havre, earlier this year, of an interesting item on the quayside. Whether you would include it as a folly is perhaps doubtful, but it has a certain sense of humour, if not of the ridiculous. The rather grand door at the top of the steps does not appear to lead into a building, but allows the VIP to make a splendid entry to the open air wooden steps which lead to the little tower, or elevated two-person **viewing platform**. Alas, I was unable to find out anything about it during my very short visit to Honfleur, but perhaps other follyists know its secrets. One can imagine a splendid ceremony taking place in the rain, of a great personage arriving to make a speech or play the bagpipes to the assembled crowd, and doing so in an utterly bedraggled state after the great door has closed and slippery steps have been negotiated. Jacques Tati would, of course, be the director.
Liz Inwood, Springhill Road, Bugbroke
[A new picture and an answer to this query you will find on page 19 and 38 of Journal 9.-*Ed.*]

Cardboard Folly

I enclose two photographs taken c.1962 in the South of France, high above the sea, somewhere between Nice and Menton [06]. It seemed to be an abandoned hotel, cardboardy gothic, balanced on a steeply sloping site, the view in the photos is from the seaward end, there may not have been, however, a view of the sea, I cannot recall. Inside it was a stripped unpleasant wreck, the back, which was plain brick, had rising only about 15-20 feet from it a high cliff possibly excavated to make room for the building. It is as you can see a distinct folly but what is it, would any other members remember or have ever seen it? It was an impressively big building from the front.
Peter Weaver, Cator Road, London

[As you can read on FiF;33 we did find what and where this 'Cardboard Folly' is: **Château de l'Aiguetta** aan de Boulevard Maréchal Leclerc in **Èze-village**. This is our best sneak view. ©PRB]

FOLLIES 28;15 (spring 1996)
In the News
French Fancy [in Dinard (35)]

Meanwhile, Dinard, the most British of French seaside resorts, has classified 407 extravagant and eccentric mansions, castles and houses overlooking the Baie de Rance in Brittany in an unprecedented move to preserve an historical coastline. The mayor, Marius Mallet, has campaigned for an all-embracing preservation order since failing to stop the demolition of Villa Crystal in 1977. This was considered the most unusual of the bizarre collection—a weird glass palace, topped by a small model of the Eiffel Tower—but was demolished to build flats. Most of the villas were built between 1850 and 1914 to attract the British and Americans but it was a Lebanese financier, Rochaid Dahdah who ensured international recognition for the resort by buying half the town and building the spectacular **Villa des Deux-Rives** and the workers' cottages, which gives the centre the look of a Breton fishing village. Another hundred villas were built by Albert Lacroix, Victor Hugo's publisher, and others owe their origins to exiled Russian princes, American millionaires and minor European royalty.

FOLLIES 35;6 (winter 1997)
In the News
More Amazing News [Reignac-sur-Indre (37)]
One of the most amazing mazes of late has to be that created out of cornfields by **Isabelle de Beaufort**. This tour de force, the world's largest **maze** (a claim open to contention, as we have just seen), took the form of a ringed planet with five satellite mazes representing English, African and Scandinavian patterns. All of this is to be found at Reignac sur Indre in France—at least until the seven-foot high corn is cut in the autumn that is. Although she expects the title to be challenged, Ms de Beaufort's methods have already been transplanted to Belgium this year, and talks have started with partners in Britain.
[Isabella works with Bernard Ramus and still plants new mazes every summer with great success.-*Ed.* 2010]

FOLLIES 37;13 (summer 1998)
In the News
SMALL CAPS. [Vaïssac (82)]

It has taken fifteen years for Gérard Brion to construct '**le Petit Paris**', a miniature replica of Paris, according to a report in the Belgian newspaper *Le Soir*. Constructed from iron and stone, all the famous monuments and features are represented, including, of course, the Eiffel Tower, which is over two metres tall. The bridges over the river Seine are just about big enough for an adult to walk across. Le Petit Paris is in the hamlet of Vayssac, attached to the commune of Sainte-Radegonde, near Rodez, in south-west France. Members who find themselves in the area should seek out the miniature capital and its builder, and send further reports – plus a photograph, please!
[More about this, and a picture you can find in FiF;155.-*Ed.* 2010]

FOLLIES 42; 3 (autumn 1999)

Sale of the Century

JONATHAN HOLT

Members who attended the Folly Fellowship Tenth Anniversary Symposium will remember the short talk that Desmond Guinness gave on the fabulous follies created by Charles de Beistegui (1894-1970) in his park at the Château de Groussay in the village of Montfort L'Amaury, thirty miles west of Paris. As rich as Croesus from his family's silver mines in Mexico, he had built by the architect Emilio Terry the *Tente Tartare*, *Temple du Labyrinth, Pagode Chinoise* and *Pont Palladien* among other delights, but the focus for five days between second and sixth June was on the contents of the château which were being sold by Sotheby's in collaboration with French auctioneers Poulain Le Fur. The total sale price of 167,748,765 francs (£16,442,382) exceeded the estimate of 100 million francs, and goes down as the most lucrative house sale ever in France.

The fourth day of the sale was billed as *La Folie des Folies*, and it soon became clear that were not only follies in the park, but for some lots there was also folly in the auction tent, as bidders were *à côté de ses pompes* in their desperation to get their hands on Charlie's goodies. One such lot was a one room pavilion which he had bought in England. Dirty and rotten, one passed it in the park and dismissed it as a bit of cheap tat. Nevertheless, an American successfully bid 675.800 francs in a frenzy of competition. One was tempted to inform him that he could have had the same thing built new for a quarter of the price, but then folly is the stuff of auctions.

Other delights included watercolours of the follies in the park. As well as the models of realised and unrealised follies. The models were mainly created by Alexander Sérébriakoff, including a design for the Temple of Baalbek and a copy of the Conolly Folly in Ireland which was to have imposed itself on the entrance to the estate, but was thrown out by the town & country planners. The largest price for a model was the one of the Pyramid (which was realised), going for 163,000 francs. Unsurprisingly, Desmond Guinness was notable among the saner bidders, but he had to give up his idea of donating the model of the Marino Casino to the National Museum of lreland. Sérébriakoff intended it for Groussay, but again there was to be no little Ireland in France, and the sale of the model was pre-empted by the Direction du Patrimoine et 1'Architecture at 59,950 francs.

Charles de Beistegui created his own *goût Beistegui*, warm and elegant at a time when the world was cold and grey. Now that his objets d'art are dispersed in the world, one wonders if they will in future generations be subject to tracing by enthusiasts in the same way as the treasures of that other great folly builder and man of taste, William Beckford, has his former chattels marked out as something special.

FOLLIES 45;11 (summer 2000)
In the News
STORM TOWER [La Boullie (22)]
And last of the trio from Alan [Terrill] is this **prospect tower** in Brittany, France, which he recently came across. It is situated just outside the village of **La Bouille**, due south of Erquy on the north coast and stands next to the road at the edge of a field and doesn't appear to belong to an estate. It has a stone, engraved '1863', above the door and contains a stone spiral staircase. The tower looked climbable, but there was a gale force wind blowing and he decided to heed the 'beware falling masonry' signs for a change. It is slim, 6-sided and at a guess, 50-ft tall, with an unusual stone balustrade at the top.
[On FiF;49 you will find Alan's photo and some more information.-*Ed.*]

FOLLIES 58;7-9 (summer 2004)

Three Normandy Châteaux

CHARLES STILLER

France is rich in country houses and landscaped parks, suggesting a corresponding richness in follies and garden buildings. Since the article some years ago on a selection from the Île de France (*FOLLIES* #24), few of them have been described in the magazine. This article is intended to introduce the reader to three notable ensembles in Normandy, dating from the 18th to the 21st centuries, and perhaps to stimulate further exploration of the numerous delights awaiting the folly enthusiast.

The seigneury of **Canon**, 14270 Mézidon-Canon (Calvados), 20 Km south-east of Caen, lies immediately to the north of the modern small town of Mézidon, though at the time the park was created it was in more thoroughly rural surroundings. The property passed through ownership by various families until in 1689 it was acquired by Thomas de Bérenger, part of whose château survives. In 1727 Thomas's son Robert, who fled to England to escape anti-protestant persecution, sold Canon at a knockdown price to Pierre de la Rocque, a tax collector from the Cotentin peninsula. The new owner built the house which formed the basis of the present Château de Canon, dug a fashionable mirror lake to reflect it, and planted some avenues.

The eminent barrister Jean-Baptiste-Jacques Élie de Beaumont (1732-1786) married Anne Louise Morin de Mesnil, sole heiress of the Bérenger family, in 1760, and challenged the legality of the 1727 sale in a protracted legal case which he won in 1768. Meanwhile, he formed a friendship with Horace Walpole, as did his wife. (Walpole admired her novel *Lettres du Marquis de Roselle* and sent her a copy of *The Castle of Otranto.*[1]) Élie de Beaumont travelled in England in 1764, visiting Walpole at Strawberry Hill in the autumn.[2] His itinerary included Stowe, where he would have seen the complete landscape and buildings as designed, augmented and modified successively by Charles Bridgeman, John Vanbrugh, James Gibbs, William Kent and 'Capability' Brown, and Blenheim, where Brown had just started his grand transformation of the park.

On taking over the Canon estate, Élie de Beaumont embarked on an extensive building programme that/which was to last for the remaining eighteen years of his life and severely to deplete the family finances. This included enlargement of the house by giving it an upper storey and major additions and alterations to the farm buildings. By far the most important part of his works, however, was his design for the gardens in the so-called Anglo-French style, which survive almost intact.

The framework for much of the scheme is a system of canals, fed by the River Laizon, which form boundaries between several sections of the gardens. A **waterfall** and **grotto** were built where one of the canals branches off the river, and decorative rocks were placed beside various streams and pools. This is not an open landscape; most of the features and garden buildings, or ***fabriques***, are surrounded by the trees that were specified by Élie de Beaumont as an integral part of his design. Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, notoriously ordered the razing of the ancient Woodstock Manor at Blenheim, but Élie de Beaumont incorporated the old Château Bérenger in his layout, embellishing it with a Tuscan **colonnade**. The renaissance **dovecote** was also included, or rather half of it was. This circular building parti-ally blocked a principal vista, so it was cut down to a semicircle and given an Italianate neo-classical façade. In 1783 Anne Louise died and her widower built a classical **temple** to commemorate her at the southern edge of the park. At the other end of the north-south axis is the Chinese **kiosk**, brought from the Château des Ternes in Paris. Two of Élie de Beaumont's buildings have regrettably not survived. One was an observatory on a hill overlooking the park, from which he could

Château de Canon. dovecote ©PRB

view the landscape under construction. The other was a bathhouse beside the Laizon. Élie de Beaumont did not subscribe to the English belief in the benefits of immersion in cold water; the idea was that he could luxuriate in a warm bath while imagining himself in the river.

Château de Canon, temple… ©PRB

The other two châteaux are both more than two centuries old, but the *fabriques* in their grounds are modern. **Château de Vendeuvre**, 14170 Vendeuvre (Calvados), is 10 Km south of Château de Canon. The estate remains in the family which built the house in the early 1750s. The plan of the gardens, again including a mirror lake, and with streams and waterfalls between two branches of the River Dives, dates from the 18th century. The visitor's tour of the grounds passes through the 'practical garden', which contains a **goat-house** of traditional Norman timber-frame construction and a fine pyramidal **icehouse**, before reaching the **Salon of the Muses**. This marks the entrance to the 'surprise' water-gardens, created by Guy de Vendeuvre during the second half of the 20th century. Detailed description would compromise the element of surprise, but it should not give too much away to list the other **hydraulic features**, which are the Chinese **Bridge**, the Tortoise **Waterfall**, the **House of the Nymph** Cleance, the **Temple** of Serenity and the Crystal Tree. Other structures include the **Belvedere**, the **Bandstand**, the Shell **Grotto** and the Elephant **Fountain**. The orangery contains an extensive collection of miniature furniture, while the Château itself houses in its basement an exhibition of kennels and furniture for dogs and cats.

Château Vendeuvre, Pyramid-icehouse ©PRB

Château Champ de Bataille, Leda temple ©PRB

Château du Champ de Bataille, 27110 Le Neubourg (Eure), lies 30 Km south of Rouen. The estate was purchased in 1992 by the interior designer and architect **Jacques Garcia**, who had already restored Château de Menou, 200 Km south of Paris, and installed in its garden a Chinese pavilion, a pyramidal icehouse and an Egyptian 'mastaba'[3]. Virtually nothing remained of the original gardens at Champ de Bataille, but they are now being reconstructed using top quality materials and workmanship throughout. The scheme is highly symbolic, with successive sections representing the seven degrees that together link the material to the imma-

terial universe. The first of these, the mineral degree, includes the house itself, the Grand Terrace and the Avenue of the Sphinxes. Continuing along the grand axis, one reaches next the vegetable degree, includeing the Groves of Erebus and Eden. This is followed by the animal degree, with the **Kiosk** of the Salamander, the Ant-hill, and the Lake of the Swans, at whose far end is the classical **Temple** of the Treasure of Leda. The degree of humanity is represented by the next, lengthy section of the grand axis, known as The Way (*La Voie*). Above it, to one side, is the Theatre of Verdure, an **amphitheatre** with seats of grass and box hedging and a sheet of water for a stage; on the opposite side, the **Hermitage** will eventually be constructed. The most spectacular section of the main axis is the water staircase, '*Les Marches*', corresponding to the degree of conscience and symbolising the passage from the terrestrial life to the celestial. To one side of this is the **Aviary** of Actaeon, to the other the Tuileries **Columns**. Most of the construction work as of September 2003 was concentrated in the region of the sixth degree, that of light. The centrepiece of this zone is the section of canal called the Reflection, symbolising the radiance of the spirit.

Finally, at the far end of the grand axis, the degree of the spirit culminates in the gilded sphere at the summit of the column. Construction should be complete within a few years. Meanwhile, Champ de Bataille provides a rare opportunity to see such an immense garden in course of development.

Further reading: Philippe Seydoux, *Châteaux du Pays d'Auge et du Bessin* (Paris: Éditions de la Morande, 1992)

1. *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. by Wilmarth Sheldon Lewis, 48 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937-83), vol. 40 (1980), pp 478-379.
2. *Ibid*., vol. 38 (1974), p.461
3. Gervase Jackson-Stops. 'Château de Menou, Nivernais'. *Country Life,* vol. 186, no. 5 (30 Jan 1992), pp. 30-35.

Château Champ de Bataille, Theatre ©PRB

FOLLIES 59;3 (autumn 2004)

Last Event of 2004

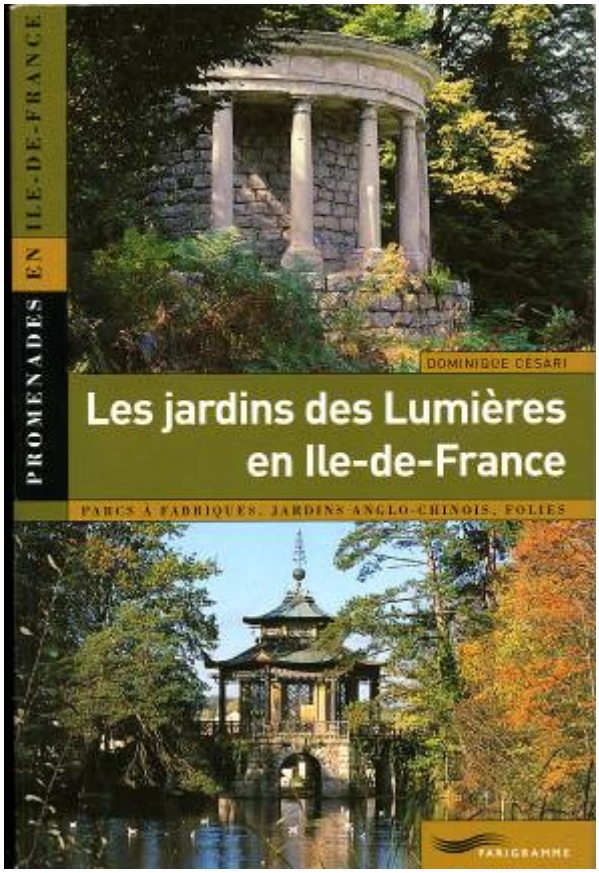
Weekend visit to the incomparable **Palais Idéal du Facteur Cheval** at **Hauterives, France.** 3rd and 4th October 2004. Ferdinand Cheval was a postman who described himself as a '*humble peasant with no learning*.' Throughout his youth he complained of strange dreams and visions of a dazzling palace, which he recorded on paper. Then, in 1879, at the age of 43, he stumbled on an unusual stone whilst on his round. This fired his imagination and began a 33-year process of erecting that palace of his dreams. What he built is unquestionably one of the greatest follies of the world, complete with Hindu temples, Arab mosques, a belvedere, menagerie of wild animals, giants and other marvels of the universe.

Now is your chance to see this most extraordinary folly as part of a weekend visit to the fashionable town of St-Etienne. The tour will include a day at Cheval's folly and his equally stunning mausoleum, together with a half-day guided tour of three buildings by the visionary Swiss architect Le Corbusier.

[*Subscribing details for the actual trip not reproduced here.*]

Palais Idéal, Hauterives: roof terrace ©PRB

FOLLIES 64;11 (summer 2006)
Book Reviews
Les Jardins de Lumière en Ile-de-France by **Dominique Césari**. Editions Parigramme. 127 pp. 9.50€. ISBN 2-84096-354-X



Despite its title, this is really the book of most of the major follies of France. Outside Ile-de-France follies are scattered irregularly, with odd clusters in the Loire region and Normandy, and so to have attempted to cover them all might have been a lengthy exercise with an uncertain pay-off. The word *Lumières* means *The Enlightenment* which is not the only movement covered in the book but it was the starting point for the creation of the gardens in which many *fabriques* were built. This word, and not *folie*, is the closest to the English folly, which Césari clarifies admirably along with other terms in the book's glossary. There is also a section on *quelques grands noms*, giving potted biographies of the major designers like Bélanger, Hubert Robert, and Blaikie, Scotland's greatest expatriate garden designer.

These are short appendices at the end of a very well illustrated pocket book, whose handy 16.5 x ll cm size does not weigh down the visitor to these *parcs à fabriques*. After a 15-page introduction outlining their origin, the book takes a thematic approach, leading us through *Des Parcs Magiques, Des Parcs Essentielles, A Une Journée de Carrosse, Parcs Secrets, Fabriques Isolées and Parcs Postérieures*. All the old favourites like Ermenonville, Jeurre, Monceau and Le Désert de Retz are included as well as some lesser-known or restored parcs like Méréville, Chatou and Bonnelles, and others with almost mythical status like Mauperthuis with its massive ruined pyramid. Each entry has essential information like how to get to the site and opening hours, or lack of them in a few private cases. Erudite and well researched, yet readable and light, this little book fills a massive gap in the folly bookshelf. -JH

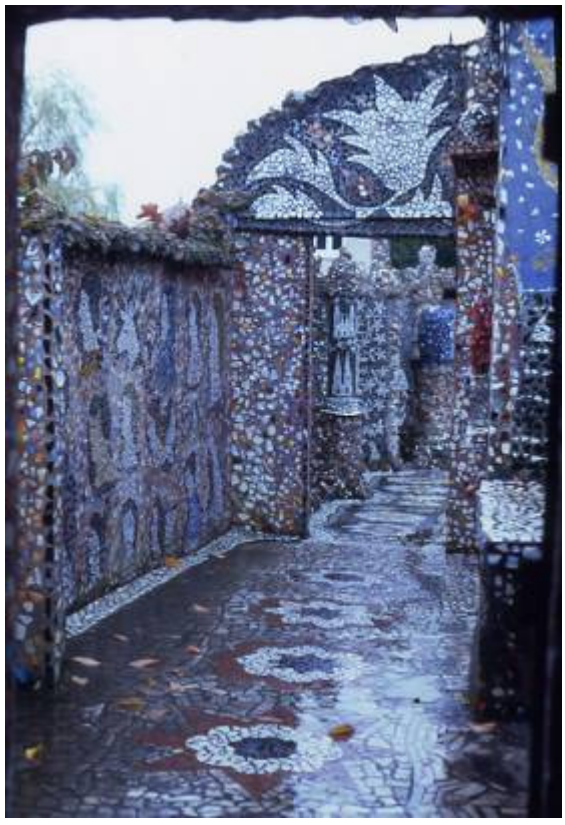
FOLLIES 64;19 (summer 2006)

La Maison Picassiette

PETER & JOYCE KIFF

On a recent trip to France we stopped at Chartres to visit its wonderful cathedral. In *Le Guide Vert* we noticed a reference to a place called 'La Maison Picassiette where dreams are realised with broken crockery'. Our folly instincts were immediately alerted and we set off for 22 rue Repos, which is situated opposite the Cimetière St Cheron, to explore further.

What we discovered there was truly amazing. Raymond Isidore (1900-1964) built and decorated this house and garden, which is an astonishing collection of naïve art. After buying the land and building his house Isidore turned his thoughts to decoration. He had often noticed on his walks through the neighbouring fields little pieces of glass, broken crockery and fragments of porcelain, which he began to collect for their colour and sparkle. Not knowing what to do with these pieces he put them in a corner of his garden. Then inspiration came to him - he would use them to make a mosaic to decorate an interior wall of his home. After that like Topsy 'It just grewed'! For 25 years Raymond Isidore laboured away decorating everything in sight. He covered not only the walls of his house but the ceilings, the floors, and the furniture. After that he covered the exterior walls, the courtyard and the garden walls. He then built a summerhouse and a chapel and decorated those and then, having nothing more to cover, he built another wall and decorated it with a mosaic representing Jerusalem. Finally he filled the garden with statues, which he also covered with fragments of glass and pottery. The work was finally completed to his satisfaction in 1962 and he died two years later.



La Maison Picassiette is open from 1 April until 3 October from 10am to noon and 2pm to 6pm. It is closed Tuesday and Sunday am. If any Folly Fellowship member is in or near Chartres we urge you to go and see this remarkable folly. Otherwise switch on your computers and do a Google search for 'la maison picassiette' and you will find several pages devoted to this crazy place.

Both pictures: Maison Picassiette in the rain. 1994 ©PRB

FOLLIES 65;10-11 (autumn 2006)

Boulogne-la-Grasse, castle for sale

RITA BOOGAART

The book collectors amongst us might be familiar with a snail-shell outhouse[1] in Boulogne-la-Grasse [60], near Montdidier, in the Haut Picardie, France. As there was no reference to this curiosity in the text, Pieter and I went to find out more in October 1994. It was a misty, grey Sunday when we arrived in the small village and asked the first pedestrian we saw if he could direct us to the 'escargot'. He could and he would if we were interested in the castle too. The castle? Yes, the 'escargot' –in fact a toilet– was just one **outhouse** of the **castle**, and there was another, castellated one, and the castle itself was built at the end of the nineteenth century in reinforced concrete, one of the very early examples. Were we interested at all? He could show us outside and inside, as it was more or less a ruin now, and had been for sale after the last inhabitant died some years ago, so he could always pretend we might like to buy...

And walking along the road out of the village we were guided to a Neo-gothic gateway, and behind it large chunks of ruin loomed with the tops in the mist, like in so many horror movies. To the right a two-storey-high block, the north building, towering over the road, looked the least inhabitable, but had inside long black cobwebs over the creaking stairs, moulding wood, bird-droppings on sculptures, broken floor-tiles; all very romantic. On the outside there was neo-medieval sculpture work, much more than on a genuine castle where it would have clashed with the original function of defence.

More to the left we saw some big round towers with curtain-walls in between, and a doorway without doors. The tops were obviously damaged, and only one sharp four-story-high remnant of wall indicated the former impressiveness of this so-called donjon. In the interior, now open to the sky, there was once an *aula* (reception hall), with a four-petal mystic rose in the mosaic floor and arches in the walls with reliefs depicting knightly scenes, and painted curtains below them.

Between those two ruins, at the far end of the castle we came to the sorry sight of what once had been the proud 'turrets' (les Tourelles), the part for festivities, containing a hall with hunting scenes above a dining room, crowned by turrets and a very tall and slender belvedere tower. This part of the ensemble stood high above the road, on a platform with retaining walls along the ramp, leading to a back door in the castle itself. Above this entrance a mustachioed knight in armour kept watch with axe, sword and shield: Charles de Boulogne, the builder of this all, had himself portrayed in style, under two swans with a golden crown in their beaks. These swans turned out to be a key in the enigmatic message of the décorations. The retaining walls stretch along the road for a while, and have some entrances for caves as if they were bunkers. In the wood just above it we found the castellated toilet.

The '**escargot'** is on exactly the opposite end of the three hectares [about 8.6 acres] of grounds. It is more of a French type: a hole in the floor. You get there by crossing a wood, passing an open Neo-gothic **rotunda** containing a 'Well of Truth' of more than thirty metres deep. Nearby one can recognize a circle of trees, the Druids' Circle, with a group of three oaks, holy trees, in the middle.

Boulogne-la-Grasse, north facade ©PRB

This was all fascinating stuff, and we were told that some historians were trying to unravel the castle's history and publish their findings in some articles. Our host did try to find publications (or promised he would), but they never reached us. So last May we decided to go back and see if there was any news to report. We were now there on a weekday, and found the local village store open for coffee. While drinking that, we learned that our former host had passed away some time ago in Paris and that the castle was sold soon after we visited, and there was now a booklet[2] available from that very shop with the articles! Which we bought on the spot of course, although the reading (French of course!) would be hard, even with a dictionary.

Boulogne-la-Grasse, snail toilet ©PRB

The booklet contains six articles that have been published in *Bulletins of the Société Acheologique et Historique de Boulogne, Conchy, Hainvillers et Alentours*, and a history essay by Johan Dreue, titled *Under the Seal of the Swan*. Now to think that all would be revealed was perhaps too much to ask, but this publication is fragmentary, confused (with no maps or plans), indecisive, and adds to the mystery more than it explains, I think (and it's not the French). One conclusion is even that Charles de Boulogne deliberately put some puzzles, enigmas into his dream castle; some sculptures and some inscriptions can be explained in different contexts. And if there have been designs, if there have been ideas on paper, they were lost in the bombardments of the First World War, when the castle was ruined considerably. What are the facts?

Auguste Antoine Charles Désiré Boulogne was born in Paris on 4 or 8 October[3] 1864, and through a civil trial got the right to call himself Charles, Count de Boulogne in 1890 when he acquired the land in Boulogne-la-Grasse. He was rich from parental fortune, and perhaps through family contacts and through friendship with Louis Galoppe d'Onquaire, a writer and playwright, who introduced him to the artistic world and to the area of Boulogne-la-Grasse, De Boulogne felt historically related to his property. In his *aula* he for instance depicted the legend of the origin of the feudal seat of Boulogne-la-Grasse, in connection with the abbey of Corbie nearby. Most of the booklet is about historic lineage, and about history repeating itself, sometimes by design. Charles de Boulogne thought himself related in lineage and in spirit with Knights of the Swan like Godfried of Bouillon, the first king of Jerusalem, with the Knight of the Swan in the Nibelungen Saga, and with Louis of Bavaria, the builder of dream-castles like Neuschwanstein.

He was also an admirer of Violet-le-Duc, particularly his Neo-style castles, and he set out to build one for himself. In 1898–99 the work began, and in 1904 Etienne Petit, a modern stonemason who promoted the use of reinforced concrete and whom De Boulogne had already met in 1895, was engaged as master mason.

Boulogne-la-Grasse, rotunda with well of truth ©PRB

The castle was almost ready when the First World War began. Major battles were fought in Picardie, and King Albert I of Belgium, the president of the French Republic, R. Poincaré, and Marshal Joffre visited the castle on 23 August 1915 when inspecting the front. In 1918, just before armistice, the heaviest fights were in this area and in the battle of Matz the castle was almost completely destroyed. And so were the documents.

Fortunately the call for photographs on postcards was great, and quite a collection of views of the castle before the destruction has survived[4]. They could be used later when compensation payments for war damage were finally nego-

tiated. Etienne Petit got a certificate in 1924 (with the wrong birthday) that he could start restorations with advance payments of the nearly one-and-a-half million Francs allotted. These repairs were carried out over a longer period, but when Charles died in 1940[5] it wasn't half ready. Charles died without an heir, as he stayed single after his betrothed was lost in a fire when at one of the first film projections in 1897 in the Bazar de la Charité in Paris the projector caught fire.

After the war the castle was owned by Gino Merlo. He died in an accident quite suddenly after his retirement, when he had just started to gather material for a history of Charles de Boulogne and his castle. This task was then taken over by the Archeological and History Society. The castle itself remained empty for some years, and got the romantic appearance we encountered in 1994. Soon after our visit it was sold to Christian Clabault, a man with a sense of duty and responsibility for the castle and its history. He was determined to save the heritage for posterity, restore the castle, and unravel its enigmas. When we asked about the castle last May the village shop owner phoned Mr Clabault and explained that a Dutch couple would like to see him and his castle. Mr Clabault agreed to see us if we could come straight away, as he was to leave shortly. He awaited us outside the gateway, and efficiently guided us all over his property while explaining what he had done since he was the owner. And we could see for ourselves that indeed the gateway was repaired and paved, the paths and the courtyard were cleared, the ruins stabilised.

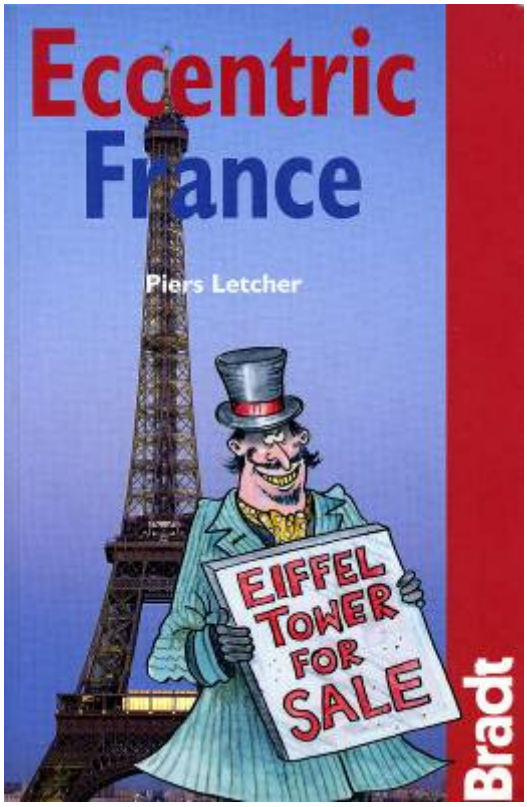
There was no time to show us the inside of the main surviving part of the castle, the north building, but we could see from the outside that he had restored this conscientiously, and made it perfectly inhabitable. It now contains four (bed)rooms and four bathrooms and all the rest. A little swimming pool was dug out in the courtyard, mirroring part of the donjon ruins. And now Christian is satisfied, and wants to move on to another project. So the castle, the whole property is for sale again! Really something for a folly enthusiast wanting a foothold in France, and not even expensive. The asking price is 700,000 Euros, less than half a million pounds. Now compare that to prices in British estate agents' windows today! And you get a real folly castle with follies in the grounds. Anyone interested can contact Christian Clabault directly on 00-33-607512540. Who wants to make a castle his home?

Boulogne-la-Grasse, donjon ©PRB

1. Michael Schuyt and Joost Elffers, *Fantastic Architecture, personal and eccentric visions*, (London, Thames and Hudson 1980), picture on page 82-83.
2. Michael Dreue, *Le Chateau de Boulogne et son message*, (Haut lieu de Picardie 1996)
3. His birth certificate gave 8 October 1864, but in 1924 Charles put under a document his date of birth as 4 October. Dreue, *opus cit*. pp. 44-45.
4. When I googled for Chateau Boulogne-la-Grasse I found several sites with pictures. In the collection of Ch. Riboulet (http://www.riboulet.info/boulogne_pages/boulogne.htm) I counted no fewer than 63 different postcards. One was of the ruins immediately after the bombardment, with in the top corner a view of before, very saddening!
5. 'Charles de Boulogne 1864-1940' is engraved on his tombstone in the cemetery in Boulogne-la-Grasse. There are no documents about the date of his demise. It is assumed that the registers were not kept up to date when so many people were killed in a short time-span at the time of the battle of the Somme. Dreue, *opus cit*. p. 44.

FOLLIES 66; 5 (spring 2007)
For Sale
For the Francophiles, 2 Rue du Moulin de Moon (at **Moon sur Elle** [50]in France) is a Maison de Maitre (Squire's House) which has undergone considerable work by its owner, and sculptor, Ian Frazer – a fine French name! He has sculpted an 'under-floor glassed and illuminated **water grotto** where swim golden carp and Chinese White Cloud Mountain Minnows.' Yours for just £314,000 or I dare say the equivalent in Euros.

FOLLIES 66;8 (spring 2007)
Book reviews
Eccentric France, by **Piers Letcher**. Chalfont St Peter: Bradt Travel Guides. 2003. 294pp. Pbk £12.95. ISBN 1-84162-068-8
Question. What do Lenin, Graham Greene, Isadora Duncan, Cole Porter and Vincent van Gogh have in common? Nobody? Then I'll tell you. That their biographies are to be found in *Eccentric France*. It is not surprising if you realise that eccentric in this book means unusual or even: interesting. That's taking the meaning of the word down a peg or two. Having said that, all the biographies (the French artists are of course in the majority) are fun to read and correct as far as ascertainable, but they don't tell you much about France being eccentric. We folly-lovers want to read all about fun architecture. Well, towards the end of the book there are exactly 30 pages for us. Out of 300. But these pages are important. They are full of excellent, clear information. That some of it is already outdated is not the author's fault; this is inevitable in a field where most of the builders are old or even deceased and some haven't yet reached fame. But we would have liked to hear more about classical folly gardens and examples of outsider art and environments. How anyone can write a book about eccentric France and not know of Claude Arz's *Guide de la France Insolite* is quite beyond me. Piers Letcher could be a great writer on our discipline and he should perhaps forget that he has written this book and start another one on the same subject. And maybe we should all help him by sharing some of our knowledge. He invites comment, and I myself have already written to him. But I do wish I had known of this book before our trip to France last year.-PB



FOLLIES 68;14-15 (autumn 2007)

Follies in France II

PIETER BOOGAART, WITH RITA BOOGAART

In *FOLLIES* magazine #2 Gwyn Headley started on a list of Follies in France. This was in 1988: it almost seems like prehistoric times in our Folly Fellowship's history; but anyway. The list dealt with the follies in alphabetical order of the counties, or *départements*, and the short introduction said to 'remember that we use the word Folly in its loosest sense to cover follies, grottoes, garden buildings, romantic gardens and any eccentric architecture'. That promised to take in jardins imaginaire and the more architectural outsider art environments as well, and indeed there were several of these on the list.

We had done some research together with Andrew Plumridge, rather frivolously, in the area round Paris in 1994 (and wrote a report in *FOLLIES* magazine #24; 5-10), but last year Rita and I felt that it was high time that this list was seriously updated. In the mean time a number of articles had appeared in the magazine about French follies and nobody had been seen to keep track of them. We had also tried to get someone else to take it upon themselves to compile a list of French follies, but we found nobody enthusiastic or unemployed enough. Our guess is that a fair number of FF members regularly go on holiday to France, more than any other country abroad (and right they are!), so it must be very useful for them to have a survey - more than a list of for example Germany or the Netherlands would be. So something should be done about it, we thought.

We went to France in May last year, thinking that we would need some four weeks to check if everything on the list was still correct and visiting one or two newly-found follies that we had read about in the FF magazines and elsewhere. France is a superfluously big country. We drove over 4000 miles, or rather 6800 kilometres, before we were home again, chased away by the cold (!) and having signally failed to visit the Paris region – we thought we could easily come back for that. And a few weeks later we went to England and saw the book *Eccentric France* in a bookshop. I read it and got the feeling we would have to start all over again. We should of course have had it before we went to France last year. As it is, we will simply have to go back this year. More's the pity!

But I guess that the combined reports I have already compiled and will compile this year about the weird and wonderful things in that country will have become too long for you to read in one go. So that's why you get this report this year and next year a second report. Fair enough? I will start by a series of short articles about follies that you have hardly ever heard of, if at all. And then later I'll write about and report on the status quo of the follies in the same order that Gwyn Headley used for his survey. For the sake of convenience the articles will be concluded by a simple list, again enumerating the follies per *département*.

Apremont-sur-Allier (18)

Andrew Plumridge had given us a copy of an article that had appeared in *Madame Figaro* (apparently the man reads all sorts of things), about **Apremont-sur-Allier**, where new Chinese follies had been built fairly recently. The name of the artist **Alexander Sérébriakoff** loomed large. So we went to the very centre of France and found the place near Nevers, which we wanted to have a look at anyway because of the film *Hiroshima Mon Amour*. Well, the atmosphere of Apremont couldn't have been further removed from the Second World War of Nevers and Hiroshima. It is a medieval-looking village and there is definitely a chocolate-box quality about it. In fact, it is the most English looking village that we have come across in France so far (not that we have travelled in France all that much). We later found out that the village's appearance owes much to the medieval-style restorations in the 1930s.

Apremont sur Allier, Belvedere ©PRB

The castle in the village boasts five towers with ramparts and machicolations and lies next to the ***Parc Floral***, the area where the follies are to be found. The follies are few,

Apremont sur Allier, ceramic panel….Belvedere ©PRB

Apremont sur Allier, Turkish Pavilion ©PRB

but of exceptionally high quality. They are in a relatively small but exquisite garden, for some elements of which the creators have had a good look at Sissinghurst and Sheffield Park. Besides flower borders et cetera there is a rather generous **cascade** (600 tons of rocks were used, they say) and some three follies.

The first one you come to is the Russian-inspired **Belvedere**, with superb views over river, village and castle. It was built in 1997 by **Gilles de Brissac**, a member of the noble family that owned the village and the one who took the initiative for the garden. The Belvedere is an octagon with a lantern. The floor is made of granite slabs from all over the world and between the open arches the painted walls are beautified by large ceramic panels depicting scenes from all over the world. They are based on figures from the Comedia del Arte who travelled round and ended up in the *parc floral*, supposedly. They follow the watercolours by Alexander Sérébriakoff, whose work is exhibited in the reception hall and who also designed the other two follies in the garden. The Belvedere is a tribute to his memory.

The **Chinese Bridge** (1985) has a little pavilion on top and is appropriately red. You can hear the waters of the cascade roaring. The last folly is a **Turkish Pavilion** (1994). It sits on an island, mirrored in the lake, to be reached by stepping stones. Inside is an inlaid floor of ceramic tiles; the ceiling is adorned by arabesques and on the walls are paintings done by the artist Jacques Roubinet, recalling Turkish splendour at the court. They symbolise the seasons of the year and are cleverly reflected by mirrors so that you can see them all at the same time. Entrance and exit to the water through wrought-iron gates. Beautiful walks go to and from the Turkish pavilion. This garden and the village itself deserve *un grand détour*.

A39 Aire de Jura, Lons le Saunier – Dole (39)

The great Neo-classical 18thC architect **Claude-Nicolas Ledoux** fell in disgrace during the French Revolution. There was little practical work for him and he set about writing an architectural treatise. It was both philosophical and illustrated, and it contained a number of drawings of the kind that he was so good at: neat, functional, austere and geometrical buildings. In 1994 we had seen some of his peculiar works at the salt-mines of Arc et Senans. There was a little exhibition of models on show. But these designs in his book were never in fact executed, except perhaps in miniature. Until around the start of the new millennium a new motorway was built through the mountainous area of the Jura and a service station was needed.

In a bid to put the Jura on the map the local authorities chose to put some of Ledoux's ideas into practice, building in concrete of course in-stead of stone and brick.


Aire de Jura, Pavillon des Cercles ©PRB

There is **l'Arche**, the arch, which houses a restaurant and also contains a *Boutique de Jura*, with local products: the Tourist Information Office. It has a tall, round **belvedere** tower on top on the side, an oversized Tuscan column overlooking the motorway. There is the pyramidal **Forge**, the boiler plant, which is fuelled by shredded wood, for a heating network linking the restaurant, the reception area and soon the hotel that is planned, an environmental showcase. And the most remarkable, even formidable building is the **Pavillon des Cercles**, originally a design for a hoop making workshop. It is now a multimedia exhibition room for shows, meetings and seminars. It has its own reception area with brochures inside. You can get to this unique, courageous and handsome ensemble both from either sides of the motorway and from RN83, direction Arlay.

Clisson (44)

We had seen a tourist brochure announcing a park with some temples in it, called **La Garenne Lemot** (*garenne* means warren). We went and had a look. It was in Clisson, south-east of Nantes and appeared to be the creation of two artists and winners of the Prix de Rome: sculptor **François-Frédéric Lemot** (1771-1827) and architect Mathurin Crucy (1749-1826). Clisson has two big places, its ruined medieval castle, and the **Villa Lemot**, the country home of Frédéric Lemot, with the river Sèvre in between. The Villa is Neo-classical, based on the great Roman villas, and has a half-circle of columns at the back of it; the front faces the river. The castle ruin and the whole village were bought by Lemot to keep the view Italianate. He could even force the villagers to employ this outlandish style for new belvederes etc. On the opposite side of the lovely, meandering river one can see (besides the castle) the **Temple of Friendship** and a bust on a **column**, dedicated to Henry IV. Apart from an **obelisk** these are the only things on the other side.


Clisson, Vesta Temple ©PRB

Now this side. The **Gardener's House** with its outbuildings, situated near the entrance to the garden, is an excellent example of Italianated rustic architecture and could have come straight from Tuscany. Otherwise the garden is rather modest in its follies. There are a few **statues** here and there and some **columns**, a classical **Roman tomb**. Worth having a closer look are a **grotto** for Abélard's Héloïse with poems carved into the stone and the **Rousseau Rock**, also with texts to invite visitors to meditation, as was the custom in the 18thC. And there is a splendid **Vesta Temple**, the tholos surrounded by eighteen columns, on a round arched base, like a bridge. The original idea was for a cascade to pour its water from here into the river below, but that never materialised. The whole of the house and the garden was under restoration in 2006, but that gives no problems and shouldn't deter you.

The great attraction of Clisson is that in the middle of France one sees Italian elements everywhere, rather unexpectedly. It is a lovely little town, as one sits ruminating over pancakes on the balcony of a restaurant perching over the river. Clisson is worth a detour. *[to be continued…]*

FOLLIES 68;23 (autumn 2007)

Le Phare de Verzenay

KAREN LYNCH

15 km from Reims, in the Champagne region of France, stands this lighthouse. Those with limited knowledge of France may need to be reminded why a lighthouse might qualify as a folly – Reims is some 200km from the sea. Le Phare de **Verzenay** was constructed in 1909 as a publicity stunt by Joseph Goulet, a wine merchant. When illuminated at night, the building could be seen from miles around and old postcards show Goulet's name painted in bold letters on the shaft. The lighthouse also became a tourist attraction, housing a cabaret and restaurant in the 'jolis Chalets' that once adjoined the tower. The lighthouse was used as an observatory during the First World War and abandoned after it suffered bomb damage. In 1987 it was purchased by the local authority, the Commune de Verzenay, and the lighthouse was restored. A very attractive elliptical wooden structure sits at the foot of the tower and houses Le Musée de la Vigne. [See also www.lepharedeverzenay.com]

Le Phare de Verzenay ©Karen Lynch

FOLLIES 69;10-11 (spring 2008)

Follies in France III

PIETER BOOGAART, WITH RITA BOOGAART

Some of you may remember in *FOLLIES* #68 a series of articles on France was started. It consists of an intro-duction, a full description of six relatively unknown follies or rather folly locations, and a brief description of a number of follies per *Département*. We had got as far as the third of the six full descriptions. Here comes four to six inclusive….

Damerey (71)

The magazine RAW VISION made Rita have a look at the internet where she found a description of a recently discovered castle, the **Château de Bresse et Castile**. RAW VISION is a magazine for outsider art, but this was called a castle and of course that sounds folly-like. The problem that we had was with the directions: it was 'located on RN73 between Dole and Chalon-sur-Saône'. Right on the road or near? Somewhat vague. Tourist information centres in Chalon and Dole denied all knowledge of it. That particular bit of road is 60 km long, but we decided to give it a try anyway. We were lucky. We only had to ask around a few times in our best French and we got a clue: we were to look for a tiger in the village of Damerey, right on the road. Why didn't they say so straight away?

Château de Bresse et Castille, Damerey ©PRB

The castle is a backyard affair behind a longish farmhouse with a few primitively fashioned animals in front. It was built between 1984 and 2000 by **Roger Mercier**, a retired seafarer in his 80s now, who came from a family of builders. He wasn't in and wouldn't be there for a few weeks, so we couldn't talk to him. For an insight into his motives I must refer you to the website: Google Roger Mercier Bresse. The Hispanic style of the castle is a tribute to his Spanish wife Manuela. He built her an environment where she could feel at home. The courtyard and towers, the balconies and corridors contain every Spanish element you could wish for. Life-size Spanish figures (of cement and then painted) all over the place. Plus scenes from his background as a sailor of course. It makes a very colourful ensemble. 'It is a huge folly', the website says, but I think that's a bit strong. It is more on a modern Dutch scale (I feel I can use this term ever since that means something to FF people). Backyard stuff, but splendid.

Montfort l'Amaury (78)

Some of you may remember the article written by Jonathan Holt called The Sale of the Century in *FOLLIES* 42;3 (1999) on **Charles de Beistegui**'s property at the **Château de Groussay** in Montfort-l'Amaury, about thirty miles west of Paris. A few lucky ones may even remember the pictures Desmond Guinness showed at the Symposium our Fellowship organised in 1998. The Taschen book *Gardens in France* shows beautiful pictures of a few of the follies, which were built between 1949 and 1969. But it also said that the park was private and couldn't be seen. An article in COUNTRY LIFE in 1987 confirmed its privacy. Personal reports that we got from France said that it was closed to the public. And then suddenly we were told that it was on the internet. And open. We checked and found the information correct, but we had no idea how long this situation would last. So when we started out for France last summer, Montfort-l'Amaury was one of our first destinations. But we needn't have hurried. The park of the Château de Groussay is open and will be for the foreseeable future.

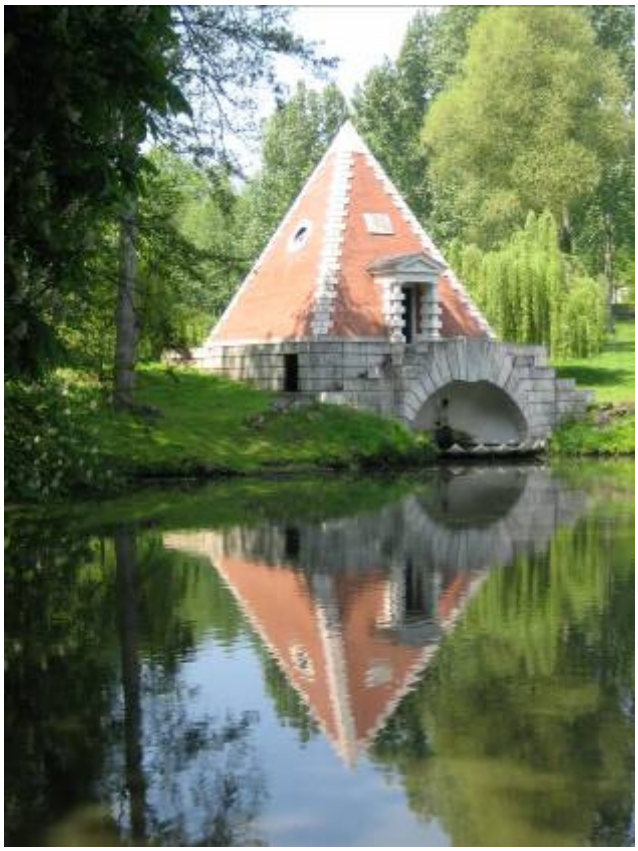
On entering the park folly-lovers will immediately recognise it as one of the greatest folly-sites in France. I'll go further. As a 20thC recreation of an 18thC English classical folly garden it must be the

Turkish Tent ©PRB

Palladian Bridge ©PRB

most beautiful one in Europe, including Britain. And that's saying something. Seriously. The best recreated English garden is in France. That may be an unexpected blow to British folly-lovers. Have you recovered from the shock? Read on then.

Charles de Beistegui must have been fabulously rich. He was. His family had made their pile out of silver in Mexico. Just before the Second World War he bought the Château de Groussay, which had been built in 1815 for a French Duchess. De Beistegui, an aesthete and collector, expanded the building and called in collaborating artists Emilio Terry and Alexander Sérébriakoff and a few architects. Terry designed the follies, Sérébriakoff put them on canvas. It was parts of the collection and Sérébriakoff's paintings that could be bought at *The Sale of the Century*, mentioned at the beginning of this article. After the death of De Beistegui in 1970 the house and garden remained in the family until a new owner, Jean-



Pyramid and Chinese Pagoda ©PRB

Louis Remilleux (a television producer we were told), after restoring the château, decided to open the garden with its 'stone monuments' to the public. Had this been in England, the garden would be simply swamped with visitors every day, but this is France. The French are not much into follies. We definitely got that impression on the bright day in May that we were there. Ah, the French. They don't know what they are missing.

The first few follies are in a straight line, with flowerbeds and neat rows of trees in between, as if the designers had some trouble leaving the idea of a French classical garden before embarking on an English landscaped garden. The first real building, after the **gate**, the **fountain** and the **obelisk**, is perhaps the most impressive one, being a **Turkish Tent**, made of copper and painted in blue and white, with huge draperies. The inside is entirely covered with Delft tiles, 10,000 of them, no less. Then comes the **Temple of the Labyrinth**, small, round and built of brick, containing some photographs by Cecil Beaton. The **Open Air Theatre** is the last element in the straight, French part of the garden.

Observatory Column ©PRB

The **Palladian Bridge** comes next, slenderly elegant across the expanse of water. From there you have a view of the brick **Pyramid**, beautifully mirrored in the lake. Farther away is **Adam's Temple** on a hillock, smallish, domed and surrounded by sheep. Closer by is the **Temple of Love**, a six-columned rotunda. Next is the **Chinese Pagoda** in the water. From the château it looks like floating, because you can't see the bridge that leads up to it. It needs several licks of paint, the only occasion we had a complaint to make. A bit further on some felting long-haired donkeys were grazing in an open area. And so on to the last two follies. The **Observatory Column** has a staircase circling round it and a viewing platform on top below the many-pointed three-dimensional star. And then the **Theatre**, built adjoining the château, a private indoor theatre inspired by the one in Bayreuth, with 250 seats, crystal chandeliers, balconies and red draperies everywhere. (We were invited by the owner to view his new film about De Beistegui there ten days later, but by then we were in another part of the country - what a pity!)

In 1993 Groussay was elevated to the Monument Historique status. I have hurried you past the follies, trying to whet you appetites, knowing that you will want to see it for yourselves, after the great claim I have made for it: the best recreated English garden anywhere, really. I hope for you that the weather will be as fine as we had it, when you go. And in the Reception building you will be tempted to buy superb quality souvenir products: porcelain, cushions, wallpaper, umbrellas, and such-like things, all decorated with images of the follies in the garden. I certainly wish this enterprise well. The French, I must say, don't seem to deserve what they have got.

[A review of the book *Groussay, Château, fabriques et familiers de Charles de Beistegui*, was later published in FOLLIES 73;14 (summer 2009).]

Dicy (89)

Alain Bourbonnais was an architect of public works in France. He had always been a bit of an artist as well and in the last thirty years of his life he collected specimens of outsider art. He got in contact with Jean Dubuffet and as a result he opened up an art gallery in Paris for *l'Art hors-les-normes*. But he and his wife were no shopkeepers and he bought a big house in the country and in the outbuildings they housed their collection, which was eventually opened to the public in 1983 as **La Fabuloserie**. [Although Alain died in 1988 the museum is still open, and] you can see there how bricklayers, miners, farmers, postmen, et cetera transcended their existence and fashioned art. It's quite something.

However fascinating this is (and it really is), folly-lovers will perhaps be interested more in what has happened on the other side of the road. There is the quaint but beautiful Bourbonnais house itself, and round the large pond at the back of it the bigger objects have found a place. Things like flimsy **towers** and a **boat** for example need to be outside (it's not called outsider art for nothing!). It is there that the bigger **statues** and **murals** and the more architectural works can be found. The museum La Fabuloserie still tries to bring in 'new' collections. The '**Manège'** of **Pierre Avezard**, a great carnival-roundabout work, has been gathered in as well. Petit Pierre lived only down the road, so to speak. But also stuff from farther away is welcome. We were told that the last remnants of **Noah's Ark** by **Camille Vidal** at Agde (mentioned on the list of French follies in *FOLLIES* 2;14 (1988-89) were there – that must have been the concrete statues at the pond, dancing to the tunes of the monkey orchestra.

[*We were not allowed to take pictures but you can find some at Google> Fabuloserie*]

FOLLIES 69;14 (spring 2008)

Rambouillet Restored

JONATHAN HOLT

Last summer two of France's most impressive and well-known follies were re-opened with much pomp and ceremony in the Île-de-France town of Rambouillet after several years' restoration. *La Laiterie de la Reine* and *La Chaumière aux Coquillages* were two of the Ancien Régime's finest small buildings: the former was one of the last gifts of Louis XVI to his fantasist wife Marie Antoinette, who loved to play the shepherd at the Hameau de la Reine at Versailles. Rambouillet, some 20 miles away, was her second playground, and here it was that Louis employed the architect Jacques-Jean Thévenin to build the dairy and Pierre Julien (1731-1805) to sculpt a set of bas-reliefs to be set into their inner walls. The scenes depicted are either typically classical with the myths of Apollo and Jupiter, or wildly rustic, including nymphs, fauns and even a man directly sucking a she-goat! The bas-reliefs were dispersed during the Revolution. They first went to the Palais de Malmaison at the request of Josephine de Beauharnais, then across the sea to Britain, but returned to France after being acquired by the art dealer Georges Wildenstein. They became the property of the French state again in 2003, and thanks to funding from the Louvre and the support of Jacques Chirac and the Minister of Culture, they have returned to their rightful place after more than two centuries away.

Laterie de la Reine, Maison de Coquilages ©Jonathan Holt

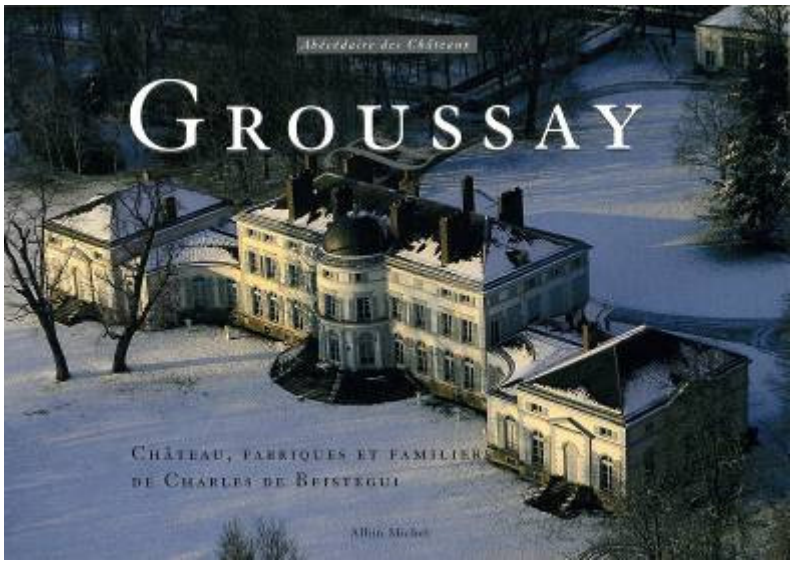
Also a long time away (from the Revolution until 1953) was Amaltée et La Nymphe, Julien's very fine life-size sculpture of a bathing beauty sitting on a goat, set in a cave made of massive rocks. This is situated at the end of the main hall of the dairy on whose walls the bas-reliefs have been re-installed. This is not the first room one enters on accessing the building but the *salle de dégustation* in the centre of which is placed a large table of Carrara marble, with rare red marble, an unusual colour for a dairy. Around the wall are niches which once had vases with goat's heads, but like the Etruscan furniture of Hubert Robert, the famous landscape designer, it was dispersed in the Revolution. When I asked to take photos of the interior, the guide called the *directeur* who said 'Non, monsieur, I'm afraid you will need the permission of the Elysée Palace'. Perhaps even from Sarko himself, I thought?

La Chaumière aux Coquillages, or Thatched Shell House, was also reopened on the same day. Designed by the architect Goupy and built in 1780 by Jean-Baptiste Paindebeld on the orders of the Château de Rambouillet's owner of the time the Duke of Penthièvre, this rich-as-Croesus man intended it to amuse his daughter-in-law the Princess of Lamballe, and set it in a jardin à 1'anglaise. It has two interconnecting rooms, the first in the shape of a rotunda, with pilasters, niches, vaults and garlands, covered in mother-of-pearl, marble and shells, with mirror effects in silvery, white and black tones, brought from the river at Nogent-sur-Seine and the seaside at Dieppe. The second chamber, *la garde-robe* or wardrobe, still has military automats which used to dispense perfume, but now out of service.

The shell house has had its roof re-thatched, and the restoration of the interior has been carried out by the Swissman Thomas Buch, and a fine job he has done. All through the ages it has had curious bones jutting out of two of its walls designed to support honeysuckle plants, no doubt to make it even more picturesque.

Guided tours leave for La I.aiterie every half an hour between spring and early autumn.

FOLLIES 73;14 (summer 2009)
Book Reviews
GROUSSAY - Château, fabriques et familiers de Charles de Beistegui by **Michel Albin**. Paris : Abécédaire des Châteaux. 2007. 110 pp. ISBN 13: 978-2-226-15223-7 – No d'édition : 25377



Groussay castle is in Montfort-l'Amaury, west of Paris, twice as far as Versailles. You can get this book at the reception at the entrance and on the internet I saw it for about €18.50. Anyway, it's worth having. In short sharp chapters and in alphabetical order it deals with all aspects of the castle, the man Charles de Beistegui and the follies in the garden. And what a garden! In an article that was already published in *FOLLIES* magazine (# 69;10) I said about this garden among other things: 'As a twentieth-century recreation of an eighteenth-century English classical folly garden it must be the most beautiful one in Europe, including Britain. And that's saying something. Seriously. The best recreated English garden is in France.' That says it all, really.

And now they have this book, with lots of perfectly charming photographs (why they put the only ugly picture on the cover (aerial, dark, in the snow) is a mystery; I guess they think it's romantic). The texts are informative and at the same time poetical. There is a definite dream-like quality about the whole book. In the chapter called *Fabrique ou Folie* I noticed the spelling Roncham for Rousham. Is it a mistake or is it French? Anyway, the whole book is in French. But that need not be an objection. The book *Groussay* is a thing of beauty. And beauty is an international language of its own. –PB

FOLLIES 77;5-6 (autumn 2010)
In the News

Pompignan in Peril

From Pieter Boogaart

Jean-Jacques Lefranc, Marquess of Pompignan, from website Wikipedia

Pompignan lies in the south of France, *département* Tarn-et-Garonne (82), near Toulouse. In the middle of the eighteenth century the castle in the town was lived in by the writer and freemason Jean-Jacques Lefranc (1709-1784), Marquess of Pompignan, who wrote poetry, plays and music and was in some respects more popular than his rival Voltaire at the time. Most of what we know about this largely forgotten figure we read in the longish article by Yves and Marie-Françoise Cranga, *Le Parc à Fabriques du Château de Pompignan: une Illustration de l'Art des Jardins dans le Midi de la* France, published in *Memoires de la Société Archeologique du Midi de la France* of 2004 (pdf on the internet; don't leave it at the English summary!). It mentions a wealth of follies there. It talks about an **Egyptian tomb** (probably used as a writer's den (!)), antiquity **tomb**, small **tomb**, Gallic **temple**, Gothic **bridge**, mount **Parnassus**, **hermitage**, old **monument**, **obelisk**, **altar**, Poor Jeanne's **cottage** and a brick **column**. If that's all. The article contains reasonably recent photographs and a lot of sketches from an anonymus bundle of travel reports of 1802. It is not always clear if indeed everything is still there to be seen. For the place is derelict, the Crangas said. Highly intriguing.

So we went there, the first time in 2008. We found the gates closed. There was nobody around and what we then usually do is go to the town hall for further information. But the neighbouring Mairie told us that absolutely nothing had been built in the castle park. Ever. They lied (or were secretive or plain stupid). We had read about the follies and didn't want to give up. So two years later we tried again. This time we were more successful. I've said it before: for folly-hunting you need luck and pluck. We saw somebody behind the padlocked gate who told us to walk round the back. And there we met Michel Penavayre.

Monsieur Penavayre is a builder and restorer of pianos, the vice-president of the society to save the castle and its grounds, local celebrity (although he doesn't look like it) and the proprietor of the estate, in short: the king of the castle. We explained who we were and that we had come in connection with our role in the Folly Fellowship and he fell silent. Then he asked: 'Do you believe in God?' Before we had time to answer his question properly he explained, laughing at our embarrassment, that he thought we were a godsend, as the very next day some garden society would come and look at the park to see if it was worth saving. He was sure, he said, that the Fellowship, as an international organisation, would support his efforts to preserve the estate. You see: the engineers of the TGV had drawn the track of the new Toulouse-Bordeaux line right across the park. The real work would not begin for another two years, but of course this meant a serious threat to the grounds. Pompignan in peril.

We joined Michel Penavayre as he went back into the castle, where we were amazed at the sight of, at a guess, some fifty antique pianos in every state of repair or preservation. But that was not what was most interesting. We were absolutely fascinated by a secret room for rituals that had been built and decorated especially for the freemasons. Michel told us that he was not a freemason himself, but evidently he knew a lot about it and as we went round the beautiful room he explained divers aspects. It would be crass to repeat them here. Apart from this gem there are three more rooms with freemason connections; Lefranc was the founder of the lodge with his name (still existing to this day in Montauban).

Stop TGV banner at Pompignan Castle 2010. ©PRB

We then strolled into the grounds, which seems to be designed as an ideal freemason park. It is not very large and looks unkempt. But Michel told us us that he had already done a great deal to it over the last few years. He had cleared a narrow valley across the length of the park so that one could see the sun rise on a certain morning, as in Lefranc's days. He had cleared and protected the follies we saw there (there are not so many and they are on the whole unspectacular), and had made arrangements for their restoration. At the moment he employs three youngish chaps to excavate the old waterworks in the park: there are a lot of little streams, culverts and bridges. He hopes to prove in this way that the accidented terrain is unsuitable for a TGV track. Monsieur Penavayre pays for everything himself. He gets the money mainly through his profession (the pianos) and by renting out a beautiful chapel in the grounds for weddings and concerts and such. For a proper tour of the follies themselves you will have to read a report in our booklet *Follies in France*.

On the spot we signed a petition against the TGV plans. The park is certainly worth saving. And you can do your bit as well. By supporting the petition (as some of you did already at the AGM) or maybe even going to France yourself to have a look at the park while you still can.

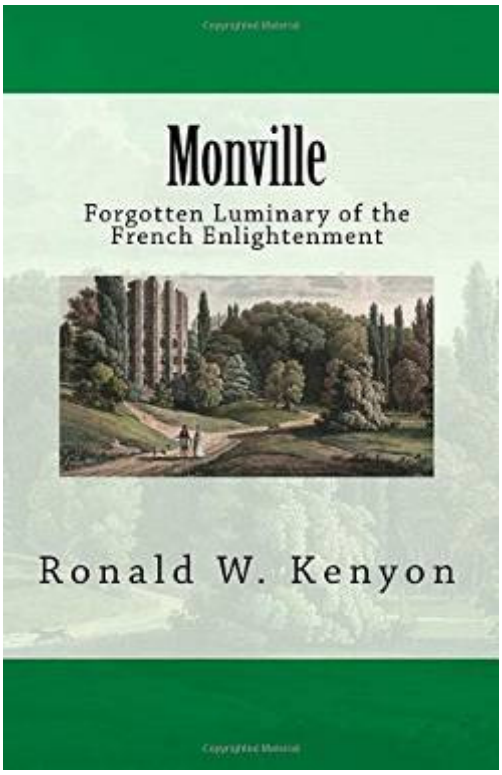
Michel assured us that all Folly Fellowship members would be most welcome, at any time, at 6 Rue J-Jacques Lefranc, 82170 Pompignan, France.

Michel Penavayre and Rita at Egyptian Tomb ©PRB

[Find more pictures in the Addenda.]

FOLLIES 87;17 (spring 2014)
Book Review
Monville: Forgotten Luminary of the French Enlightenment by **Ronald W. Kenyon**. CreateSpace, Charleston, SC, USA Pbk $15.15 (listed price); Kindle ebook £3.80. ISBN 978-148114829-0

The man who created the Désert de Retz and La Maison Colonne, without doubt the most extraordinary building of the C18, has remained an elusive enigma. His stupendous house and remarkable park lying just to the west of Paris are so éblouissant, as they say, that one forgets there was one man, one mind behind their genesis.



The Chevalier de Monville, as he is known, appears not to have gone by that name. He was born, according to Ronald Kenyon's aimiable biography, as François Nicolas Henri Racine de Monville and died as Racine, François Nicolas Henry. The author makes it clear from the outset that this is a study of the man before his works, the subject of the Désert itself having been comprehensively covered in Diane Ketchum's 1994 work *Le Désert de Retz*. Even so, it is surprising to find no mention of Olivier Choppin de Janvry, who has done so much to save and restore the Désert to its present immaculate state.

Because no images of Monville are known to exist, because there are no letters, no papers, we are on stony ground for the professional biographer. We have to subsist on scraps of references and mentions in journals of the day, hinting at a playboy lifestyle, a flâneur who was also an accomplished musician and "perhaps the greatest archer in Europe", who "was 5 feet 8 inches tall and looked like a god." He held wonderful parties at the Désert. Sam Johnson decribed the décor of the childless Monville's town house as 'furnished with effeminate and minute elegance'. It is hard to escape the implication that here was a gay man.

We tend to forget how utterly revolutionary the French Revolution was. As well as sweeping away parliament, the monarchy and the aristocracy, they instituted the French Republican calendar and even swept away time, replacing it with a decimal system giving a day of 10 hours of 100 minutes, each made up of 100 seconds. It didn't work — this was its own folly — but the metric system of weights and measures survived, and indeed is still used in some barbaric countries today.

How did Monville, with his wealth, escape the flames of this fervour? Born in 1734, he inherited 4 million livres in 1761, yet had no place at Court. In 1792, when the Republic was declared, he was 58, an old man by C18 standards, and old age confers the advantage of invisibility. Not being a courtier must have been an added benefit. 'Chevalier' de Monville appears to have been an honorary title, like 'Colonel' in the southern states of the USA. Nevertheless two years later he was jailed on the flattering charge of 'anglomania', although he was released a couple of weeks later.

Because there is so little documentary evidence of Monville's life, the biographer is forced to extemporise. We learn that Monville had a tethered balloon at the Désert; three pages on the history of lighter-than-air flight later, we are being given the date and death toll of the Hindenburg disaster.

This is the major problem with this biography. The writer simply doesn't have enough facts. He does a valiant job assembling and riffing on the little that is known, but he is forced into diversionary discourses on Benjamin Franklin, masons, the guillotine, automata and more. Each character is introduced with his dates of birth and death, which makes for less than fluent reading.

This is an important book because it is the only one on the subject. It is somewhat like a choux pastry, visible but insubstantial, not to everyone's taste — certainly this is a book to be dipped into and referred to rather than read. It's none the worse for that, but it does mean its audience will be found among existing devotees of the Désert de Retz. It won't make many converts by itself. But if like mine, your interest in the Désert is more than passing, you will need this book. —GH

FOLLIES 88;1,6-12 (summer 2014)

Our Forth Grand Tour de France

PIETER BOOGAART

As representatives of our Folly Fellowship in continental Europe we have, over the years, regularly travelled in France. And even before we reached that exalted status we used to go there now and then. Where we live in the Netherlands, Eindhoven, France is just over two hours away. So it's easy enough to reach by car.

As readers of the FF Journal know, we had filled two journals with information about follies in France, #9 and #10. For the sake of convenience we will refer to the couple as FiF. For the research we went to France in 2006, 2008 and 2010. Three times a big tour round anticlockwise, towards Brittany, along the west coast to the Pyrenees, along the south coast to the Alps, and back through the north east of the country. All the time we made trips into central France, but the great circular movement was basically the route we took. For the rest we relied on earlier trips into France for shorter research and breaks, notably a trip round Paris with Andrew Plumridge in 1994. And we trusted information from friends and acquaintances and the evermore informative internet. So that's how our two journals came into being, the whole bumf somewhat awkwardly divided into two parts, plus a third part on the internet, the Appendix to FiF on the Fellowship's website.

The journals contained all we knew at the time. But we kept surfing the internet for more and friends kept giving us tips. And then in 2012 the newsletter of the DonderbergGroup, Portefolly No 37, came out. It had among other things an article by Anton Nuyten of 24 pages, well illustrated, with addenda to our journals. Nothing sensationally spectacular, but good, useful well-ordered info on follies and related stuff that we had apparently missed. 24 pages! We knew of course that Anton had travelled in France extensively and especially spends whole days on the internet, for we had profited by him in the past. But his research, his impressive collection of picture postcards and what we had gathered in the mean time made us eager to go back to France again. Unfortunately Rita had broken her leg earlier that year, so we had to postpone things.

Last year, 2013, we went to France three times. In April for five days to the Lille area in the north-west, in September to the north-east for a week and in May-June for a month on a new great round trip, again anticlockwise, our Fourth Grand Tour de France. The main subject-matter in April was art, although we also paid a visit to some minor follies that will eventually appear in the List of Follies, Grottoes and Garden Buildings that began on FiF;177. And we went to **Ruitz** (*département* 62, henceforth indicated as **(62)**) for **Snow White's Garden**, a fantasy garden. We happened to meet Turenne Pecqueur there, the owner of the house and the son of Charles Pecqueur, the creator of this outstanding piece of outsider art. The house itself, heavily decorated inside, was empty and for rent. Turenne guided us round and we took new pictures. When leaving Ruitz Rita spotted a naive **sham mausoleum** on the local graveyard, also by Pecqueur, when he was mayor of Ruitz. The text of FiF;116 will have to be adapted. [You can try Addenda 2016]

Ruitz (62), naive sham mausoleum at graveyard ©PRB

The first object of our interest was something that had got a paragraph on FiF;116, **Berck-Plage (62)**. I said there that we hadn't found it on the internet, but after our publication it suddenly appeared there: **Joseph Meyer's outsider garden**. Well, it's not so much a garden as an elaborately decorated, castle-like house. It's a typical outsider environment and folly at the same time. In the pouring rain we rang the bell and were cordially received by the family that live there. They had good information for us from

newspaper articles. It appeared that Joseph Meyer (born 1914) was a war invalid, missing a leg and a few fingers. But that didn't prevent him from construction work. He wanted to prove he could do it in spite of his handicap. Between 1950 and 1960 he single-handedly built a richly decorated outer wall for his 'castle' and two fantasy towers with gateways and staircases and all the trimmings roundabout the house he lived in. On a thin arch he carved a shield with the letters KIA MATE TOA, Fight Unto Death, the motto of the New Zealand (Southland) soldiers who served in Egypt and Gallipoli in 1914-15.

We were welcome to see everything. At he back of the house the family had built an apartment (where they sometimes run a B&B) in style with the castle. They promised us to phone members of the Meyer family for more information on Joseph. We felt lucky to have seen it, despite the rain that threatened to mar the view of the bright white walls and towers.

Joseph Meyer's house, Berck-Plage (62) ©PRB

The first real folly that we encountered was one that in normal cicumstances we would hesitate to call a folly because it was ultimately built for commercial purposes. I was dreamily driving near **Pitres (27)** on the D20 (Côte des Deux Amants) and Rita was enjoying the view when she shouted out and told me to stop and turn. What she had seen was a series of blinking lights under a white cupola. We went and investigated.

Temple d'Amour, Pitres (27) ©PRB

It was a beautiful round temple. Behind his *Salles de Réception* Raymond Gisteau had single-handedly built a **Love temple**. An elaborate bridal suite or honeymoon suite, shaped as a reconstruction of the tholos, the now ruinous, circular temple of Athena in Delphi, Greece, of which only three upstanding columns and the base can be seen. Rita immediately recognised the various component parts that we had seen in the museum in Delphi. It had taken Raymond eight years to build this temple with components from self-made moulds, decorations and furnishing. Brand new it was, looking gorgeous and white. We walked round it taking pictures until we saw that there was a light on inside. We knocked and

were opened by the creator of this beauty, who had been talking to some people that had come to instal WIFI in this bridal suite. You can't be without WIFI on your honeymoon of course!

Raymond invited us inside, showed us pictures of the developing stages and later took us and his guests on a tour of the building. On the first floor we saw the circular bed with wardrobe and dresser, shower and toilet. Rich ceiling with gilded rocaille, mirrors and boards to black out the windows. Outside is a circular gallery full of lion heads and scroll motifs. Two staircases down, both unfortunately too narrow to carry your bride up or down, if you would be so inclined. The ground floor consists of a luxurious circular room with a kitchenette on one side. Everything is finished off extremely neatly and cleverly, lighting, heating, everything. And WIFI to follow. The reception rooms are adorned with classical sculpture and perfectly suitable for the larger, and, I guess, more expensive type of wedding parties. Monsieur Gisteau calls himself among other things a *bricoleur*, a handyman, but he is of the stylish sort. In spite of the attractive setting of it all, it remains to be seen if this building is a folly or not, here in the middle of nowhere. Time will tell.

In **Le Neubourg (27)** at the **Champ de Bataille** castle the Eastern-looking extension to the garden (FiF;58), the Oriental palace, is almost finished as far as we could see through the hedge, but not open to

the public. It is supposed to remain private for the use of the owner of the place, Mr Garcia. The aviary of Actaeon is out of bounds too. There are also a new classical greenhouse, a topiary rams' alley, a larder or a dairy of sorts, green men on the gates and gold-leaf vases, everything looking very rich, much like Versailles. They are still very busy there and we have no idea when the place will be finished. But it is all splendid.

On we went to **St-Germain-sur-Avre (27)** to call on Didier Lobert (de Bouillon Viéville) again. His self-built big tower or **donjon** was an excellent folly when we saw it the first time (see FiF;58-59) and it still is now it is virtually finished. But the chap himself –he is in his seventies- was in rather poor shape. He had suffered heart trouble and told us sad tales about his two old cars, his taxes. and his hard work to turn his house into a sham cloister, which showed no real progress. This house proved to be worse than ever: junk, mess, clutter, shambles, rubbish everywhere inside and it was hard to find two broken chairs to sit on. No wonder he asked us if we didn't know a good woman to help him and inspire him in his paintings. We are just passing this on. Any ladies interested? In principle he is a sweet old chap.

Cloister under construction... ©PRB

We also sold a few sets of FiF to Hugh Arnold. Who is he?, you may ask. Hugh Arnold is the man who is building our most favourite folly in France but one. Our number one is postman Cheval's **Palais Idéal** in **Hauterives (26)** (gracing the front of FiF I) and number two is Hugh Arnold's **Tunnels and Nympheum** in **Marigny Marmande (37)** (gracing the front of FiF II).

We met Hugh for lunch with his family in a suburb of Paris, Verrières-le-Buisson. He told us among other things that he had branched out into another area of glamour photography. He used to do fashion but now he does beautiful naked ladies under water, and what with one thing and another he had stopped work on the pool in front of the nympheum, temporarily. He seemed just as keen as ever, but hadn't got round to it. In a few years' time he would pick it up again. A great pity, but at least we got a straight answer. That is, until we got a shocking email from him in November 2013 in which he announced that he was planning to sell the place, which is officially called Château de Mondon, with all outbuildings and the folly. He was disappointed with the way things had been going and I suppose he could use the money in this financial crisis. So, we will try to talk him out of his present plans, but for the moment Mondon is for sale, inclusive of the half-finished most extraordinary folly in the world Apparently, folly-building is a rich man's game after all. [in Follies magazine 91;10-11 Hugh tells the whole story.-*Ed*]

Rotunda Temple and belvedere-pavilion, Chateaubriant ©PRB

In **Ste-Gemmes-sur-Loire (49)**, near Angers, we went to see the follies in the garden of the castle Chateaubriant. No connection with the writer Chateaubriand (FiF;169); it just means brilliant castle. We were welcomed by the owner, Madame Sylvie Mercier de Flandre, who used to be an international concert pianist and is now a photographer , painter and writer. She showed enthusiasm for our books and promised to buy a set. Then she walked with us through the garden for an hour. Apart from some sculptures and a tiny column we saw the main features, probably designed by Bardoul de la Bigottière around 1775, of which the first was a rotunda **temple**, on top of an **icehouse**, hard to see among all the trees and shrubberies. In the more neat part of the garden there was an octagonal **belvedere-pavilion**, which looked splendid. A rich ceiling inside and well decorated.

Tour Rivalland, detail ©PRB

An unexpected find in **Fontenay-le-Comte (85)** was the concrete **tower** of Gustave Rivalland. Fortu-nately and quite contrary to French tradition we also saw some information about it at the

entrance to a castle opposite. Some lines in English as well! Rivalland was a naval officer and a serious freemason. In 1880 he built this tower like a lighthouse, 25 metres high, as a challenge to the religious dominance of the steeple of the main church in the town. He had travelled widely in the Far East and studied oriental philosophy, which he considered superior to Roman Catholicism. As a really headstrong fellow he put all kinds of symbols from the Asian cultures and from his own free-mason beliefs on the tower. Maybe alchemy too. A goat, a unicorn, keys, compasses, masons' and architects' utensils besides flowers, butterflies and garlands. A cage of Faraday was on top, symbolising that the light comes from science, not from religion. This 'cage' was repaired in 1943 by the occupying Germans who used the tower as a lookout point. The whole looks more like a decorated tall factory building with an octagonal steeple on it, in tiers, or maybe it's better to say that it looks like a non-religious church, if you follow my drift.

Tour Rivalland, ©PRB

Near **Confolens**, or to be exact in **St-Maurice- des-Lions (16),** is the Domaine de Villechaise, where John and Philippa Holroyd manage their *gîtes*, in this case their luxurious guest accommodations. By the side of the well-restored French *château* is a smallish oblong lake, with trees round it and at the end of it, mirroring in the water, a folly. It is a concrete irrigular cemented roundish **fish temple,** like a grotto with stalactites in all sizes. Well-kept, the hexagonal tiled roof looks new. Seen from nearby the cement shows differently-coloured patches. You can go inside and find a cement floor with mysterious patterns chiselled in it (with a magic circle?), and some light furniture, so that you can sit, have a drink and look beyond the stalactites through the wide opening at the lake. Niches and a window - it is a very pretty little building. Folly, fishing, square dovecote, swimming pools, tennis courts, plus the eighteenth-century castle: the whole place is up for sale.

Fish Temple, Domaine de Villechaise ©PRB

After a number of detours in **Montpellier (34)** we found the **Mogère** castle where we were cordially received by the owner, Viscount de Saporta himself. He went out of his way to show some of the funiture and stuff inside the castle after he had learned that we came from the Netherlands. Pointed out Dutch things for instance, which was very kind. We had come there for the *buffet d'eau* and the aqueduct. A ***buffet d'eau*** is an elaborate stepped fountain on a sort of altar with a basin underneath, against a wall. It was indeed of superior quality. Lots and lots of shells in patterns, relief vases and frostwork, vases and sculptures and even a horse on top of the wall over the 'altar', which consists of rockwork. A wide-eyed

Buffet d'eau and aqueduct Mogère castle, Montpellier (34) ©PRB

head of a wild man in the centre. It was done in the 18thC Louis XVI Buffet style*. Together with a couple of conservatories it forms the north wall of a large formal garden. To the right of the *buffet d'eau* is the **aqueduct**. It is about 1.5 metre high only and some 55 metres long. If the pumps were working, water could be fed through the open channel towards a lionhead above a small bed of flowers. But they weren't, not surprisingly. The whole estate gave the impression that it was waiting for high summer, when they do receptions there. As to the aqueduct: we had never seen anything like it, and we found it as exceptional and beautiful a garden feature as we could wish for.

* The very first French *buffet d'eau* dates from 1703 and is at Versailles (78) in the Trianon gardens. Then in the 18thC many rich Montpellier merchants settled for the summer in *folies,* and modelled the estates on the royal properties. Mogère (34) claims to have the first shell-covered *buffet d'eau*. The one at the Domaine de Mosson (see right.. ©PRB), also in Montpellier, is in the middle of a 100-metre-long wall and has lost almost all its decorations. In the adjoining *département* St-Privat castle at Pont-du-Gard (30) has a splendid example, backed to the orangery. An unadorned one is in Villeneuvette (34), simple but big, and called Le Grand Guillaume for some reason.

Les Baux-de-Provence (13) is always full of tourists because of its dramatic situation in the rocky landscape, but we came there for the so-called **Pavilion of Queen Jeanne**, sitting in the corner of a tiny garden, the King's orchard, in Vallon de la Fontaine (left ©PRB). It is a 16thC stone hexagonal pleasure pavilion, in fact built by the much later Jeanne de Quiqueran. In the Provence the 15thC Queen Jeanne is often wrongly associated with facts or buildings, even by the famous Provencal writer and Nobel-prize winner Frédéric Mistral. He wrote the '*tragédie provençale*' the play *La Reine Jeanne* about this queen, and called this cute building **Love Pavilion**. In 1907, anticipating his death, he had a **mausoleum** built for himself on the churchyard at **Maillane (13)**, some ten miles further north, looking just like it, only with his two dogs as keystones instead of fauns (right ©PRB). He died in 1914; a hundred years later his memorial is beautifully restored, sparkling like new.

Being this far south in France and heading north again, we couldn't resist the temptation to have another look at the **Palais Idéal** in **Haute-rives (26)** (see FiF;53-54, 97-98, and left ©PRB). Along the walls that close off the back garden the organisation had put up a long series of display cases with information on various kinds of follybuilders, creators of environments and other outsider artists from all over the world. They had come from from the Museum of Outsider Art in Lausanne, which in turn inspired us to go to Switzer-land among other things later in the year. The shop at the Palais Idéal didn't want to display our FiF books, but they would think about it. Too many books on the Palais Idéal for us to collect them all. On the way back we spent some time at the many souvenir shops in what has become the most lucrative street in Haute-rives.

Anton Nuyten's postcard collection brought us to a very special tower, by a misnomer called '**La Tour Eiffel de Jallieu'** in **Bourgoin-Jallieu (38)**, but actually in the neighbouring Ruy, and nothing to do with Eiffel. It was built for Auguste Genin, a rich barrister and factory director, at the end of the 19thC on a hillock near his *château* Thézieu (not to be confused with his other property, *château* Petit Mont, at the other side of the road). The present owner of the castle and the tower was away. A good thing too, or we might never have seen it. Apparently he forbids anybody to go near it, presumably for health and safety reasons. There are apartments in the castle and one of inhabitants, a very good-humoured chap, Nicolas Ballet, allowed us in after he had expressed his amazement that we knew about the tower at all, for it is virtually invisible from a distance because of the trees. It is round, the lower storeys can be entered via an outside staircase, supported by columns. Lots of supporting iron inside. Then follows a drum storey and the highest bit is open again with another set of columns, topped by a four-pointed cross with cups that carry small trees! Intricate but elegant, one might say. We know very little about its history. Neither does Mr Ballet, but he is going to try and find out more. At the foot of the tower Rita searched for the crypt, covered by a big stone with a skeleton carved into it. The tower seems to have been built in honour of some sixty dead people whose skeletons were found during the groundwork for the castle in the 19thC, and buried in this crypt. Hence its other name: **Tour des Morts**. Or it may be Tour des Maures, because that's also a story. But Moors may be difficult to match with the David star in the floor that Rita saw. That may be Jewish or a freemason symbol or perhaps the well-travelled Auguste Genin, had seen it somewhere. There is a lot to be found out about this building. Adding to mystery here, besides some minor stuff, were great round stones, at the tower and near the gate, with relief sculptures on them, but they were largely covered with moss, so that we couldn't properly see what they were

about. The castle itself also bears interesting features: gargoyles, salamanders?, cats and other animals. So there is work to be done.

A grand outsider environment is formed by the work of **Emile Damidot**, a.k.a. Frère François, the last hermit in the real hermitage on Mont Cindre, in **St-Cyr-au-Mont-d'Or (69)**. From 1878 to 1910 he worked on his creation in the adjoining narrow quarry. Unfortunately it is mostly religious stuff, so that I for one have trouble including it in folly-dom, but it's impressive nonetheless. 22 years of doing rocaille work with stones, cement and a few bricks can't help being imposing. We had looked over the walls at first because the site was closed, but later we went to the town hall and they produced Marie-Chantal Pralus, who proved an invaluable source of information. Plus she had a key. She showed us round, all of us in hard hats, and we went up and down the narrow staircases among the countless niches, which had lost most of their saints' figures, and the miniature churches and chapels and a 12-metre-high belvedere. The main hermitage chapel featured some sculptures as well and paint-work by local artist Louis Touchagues, from the 1950s.

But on the way back Rita spotted a round tower over a wall at 69 Route du Mont Cyndre with impressive double anti-clockwise-twisting outside staircases that looked more like a real folly to us. Everything in rocaille work, it seemed. (left ©PRB) There used to be a space under-neath it, some workers for present owner, a Mr Maness, informed us. Marie-Chantal knew that it was built between 1885 and 1900 by a gardener, a Sieur Nesme, and that Emile Damidot was jealous of it for taking away the customers that used to bring him presents, in ex-change for his blessings and access to the hermitage 'garden'.

Another case of sheer serendipity was Rita's spotting of a lovely little **tower** (right, ©PRB) in the garden of a town house in **Scey-sur-Saône** (70). Round, three stories high with decorated cornice and a conical roof with tiny dormer windows and one gargoyle spitting gutter water away from the building. The upper floor is reached by outside metal staires winding half circle clockwise. A neighbour told us it was built as a kind

of summer-house around 1900 by the parents of the present owner, the 102-year-old Father Duvolet. Unfortunately he doesn't live there, and his tower is delapidated, but worth rescuing all the same. It was listed recently.

Finally we went back to **Dicy (89)** for the **Fabuloserie** museum. That mainly outsider art location consists of the museum itself and on the other side of the narrow road a walled garden, with the larger outsider artwork inside. Or should I say: outside? Anyway, Rita had already spotted some figures on top of the wall and recognised them as the work of Charles Pecqueur, of whom we had seen Snow White's garden and other things in the village of Ruitz. We were gracefully received at the museum which had been initiated by Alain Bourbonnais (FiF p161). They told us that his wife Caroline Bourbonnais was still around at 89 years of age, and sure enough, there she came round the corner. As soon as she learned what we were after, she took us with her and showed us the garden. She allowed us to take photos and told us about their friendship with Charles Pecqueur. She explained that they had both posed for Pecqueur, she as Snow White, some 70 years ago. Both sculptures were right there in the garden, and we took pictures of her with the sculptures (above ©PRB). We could hardly believe our luck. We even scored a picture of **Pierre Avezard**'s 23-metre-high wooden **Eiffel tower** of 1937! (right ©PRB)

Well, that's how it goes when you are travelling round France looking for follies. You meet with all sorts of interesting people and see all sorts of beautiful or extraordinary things, and in order to do that you need both luck and pluck. We feel fortunate and favoured that our financial means, freedom of choice and our physical health allow us to enjoy these good things in life.

As indicated at the beginning of this report, the rest of our findings can be read about in due course on the internet. www.follies.org > publications > journal 10 > appendix with addenda, or

www.follies.org.uk/pdf/appendix FiF2011.pdf (but 2011 will change into 2014).

We intend to update FiF in the Addenda with snippets of news and more photos. We also hope to add a new version of the List per *département* with many interesting places, to finish our project. Although, will there ever be an end to it?

Postscript: a useful website for outsider art, run by Dutchman Henk van Es: www.outsider-environments.blogspot.nl

[P.S. 2016: In December 2016 Journal 15, *Follies in France III*, was published with much new stuff in articles and in List. The Appendix as well as the Addenda have been updated. On the FF website there will also be a comprehensive and extendable version of List, now called Gazetteer, of follies and folly-sites per *département*.-PRB]

FOLLIES 90;16 (spring 2015)

The Visitors' Book

GWYN HEADLEY

Staying with friends is an unalloyed delight until the time comes to leave. Even if the delight was alloyed in any way, it will be as nothing to the gut-churning misery induced by mine host popping his head cheerily round the door in the midst of your packing and asking "Would you mind? It's silly, I know, but it's become a sort of tradition for us. Just a few words! Nothing special!" And there I stand, a pile of knickers in one hand, shaving stuff in the other, trying to transfer them into one hand so I can accept the proffered tastefully leather-bound Smythson (it's only ever Smythson) visitors' book.

I once spent three days in the French village of Hautrives, in the Drôme. I was there doing a TV programme for the Discovery Channel about the world's greatest folly, the Palais Idéal of the Facteur Cheval. If you like follies, even just a little, then a visit is mandatory. It is simply spectacular. I've seen more follies than most, and this is unquestionably Number One.

However television programmes take a long time to make, and this gave me plenty of thinking space, which in turn led to a revelation. People have puzzled over the postman Ferdinand Cheval's motives and reasons for years — what drove him to create this masterpiece? The answer grew inside me over 72 hours, and finally it manifested itself: there is bugger all else to do in Hautrives. It is the most boring village in France, and that is saying a lot.

The lovely Carey-Ann Strelecki, the programme's director, was busy all day on placement shots and only had time for me in the evening. When I wasn't nursing a cheap beer I passed most of the day with the genial Pascal Cambrillat, then the Directeur of the Monument, comparing the cocoa mass of different chocolates. This was before the internet, remember. Nobody did anything.

While rootling around in Pascal's office I discovered the Registre des Visiteurs, the Visitors' Book (not by Smythson) for the Palais Idéal. The first entry was January 1st, 1905, before the Palais was anything like the size it became, and it was from a Jules Pangon, Docteur de Médecin de St. Vallier (Drôme), who wrote "De plus en plus enthousiasme pour la beauté et originalité incomparable de ce Palais Imaginaire". Evidently this ran in the family, because Dr. Pangon was Pascal Cambrillat's great-grandfather.

Carey-Ann Strelecki at the Cheval Tomb © Gwyn Headley / fotoLibra.

I leafed through the book. In the early days everyone who visited inscribed their name; later, with the rise of mass tourism, it was reserved for more distinguished visitors. In that first year there was a visitor

from Monaco; a visitor from Lucca in Italy, one Isola Fortuna; a traveller from Constantinople; the Marquis du Briand, and some strangely named people from London — a Mr J. Chardonnet, S. Woeskott and Chartrose Cloves. There was a Walter Wrackmeyer from Germany and then some more realistic English names: F. E. Ward from Leatherhead, Mrs C. F. Olive from London, Dorothy and Peter Ridley from Chelmsford, Lewis MacPherson from Manchester — all in 1905.

Then the great and the good of France paraded through the pages. I fast-forwarded closer towards my era: Lawrence Durrell on May 6th 1961; Eric de Rothschild, Paris, on January 1st 1962; Ian and Judy Nairn, October 21, 1961, who wrote "Avec toute mon admiration pour ce travail immense."

Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely visited from Paris on January 31st 1963. The visit inspired Saint Phalle to create the Giardino dei Tarocchi in Grossetto. In March 1965 Michael Gill, the BBC film director was there, followed the succeeding year by novelist John Berger, hailing from Geneva, with the artist Lionel Miskin from Mevagissey.

Two last names were spotted: on May 22, 1982 Susan Sontag wrote "Un rêve depuis vingt-cinq ans, enfin accompli," and five years before he died the idiosyncratic Austrian architect Friedensreich Hundertwasser commented on July 25, 1995 "Un but dans ma vie."

But then they didn't have to spend three days there.

A child of the 50s, Gwyn's passion for all things folly was fanned by a visit to Broadway Tower. A founder of FF, he has produced five books and 40 e-books including being half responsible for the seminal work *Follies, Grottoes and Garden Buildings* - the must-have reference book for all would-be folly enthusiasts.

Gwyn Headley © Private Collection

FOLLIES 91;10,11 (summer 2015)

HUGH'S FOLLY: THE END OF AN ERA

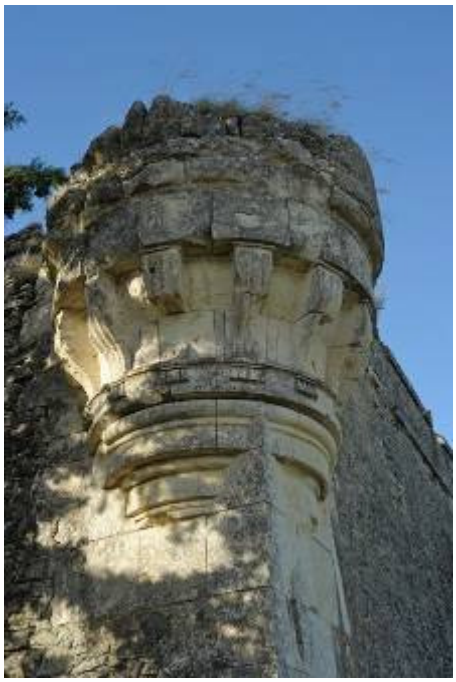
HUGH ARNOLD

Twenty-two years ago I stood in the bathhouse at Pompeii and decided I wanted to build a house underground. I had recently bought a ruin which no sane person would even consider embarking on, just south of the Loire Valley with panoramic views across the undulating Touraine countryside and I decided to put into it everything that I felt was missing to make my own Pompeii and the house in Tuscany that I had always dreamed of owning but could not afford.

My Uncle Mark, an architect who used to come and stay every summer, asked me if it was my idea to have the pool directly in front of the house in the large courtyard or make a journey to it, and I replied 'much more exciting a journey to it' and so the journey began! I was still single with only thoughts of having fun and 'ultimate' parties. I put together some ideas I had for a large ballroom underground with a tunnel leading to it from the courtyard on the other side of a six-metre high wall, and a pool.

Projection; drawing by Hugh Arnold © Hugh Arnold

Slightly in fear of the Historical Monument department in Tours I decided not to go and see them and mention my subterranean plans which of course they would not understand and thus would want to come and inspect the site. I had already dealt with them on the choice of mason for the repair of a cupola for the entrance tower and knew how pedantic they could be so I decided to embark on this adventure without consulting them. After all, my ideas were crazy and I knew they would turn them down as the site was protected (*Inscrit dans les Inventaires des Monuments Historiques*).



From the aerial photos you could see the outlines of a Roman fortress, though that had long gone when, in the eleventh century, Mondon was founded as the religious order of Saint Martin de Tours. By the seventeenth century a full scale fortress had evolved into a Renaissance chateau, passing through the hands of various noble families: Marquis of Vassé, Artus de Cossé Brissac, the Maréchal of France, Louis du Plessis, ancestor of the Cardinal Richelieu for whom the nearest large town was built to house his entourage, and lastly Joseph Cadet who supplied arms to the French Army fighting in Canada where he made his fortune. Returning to France he was imprisoned and his vast estate broken up and sold, often only for the value of the stone itself, while he was behind bars in the Bastille. All that remained were the useless decorative features including a ruined chapel.

When I bought it I was based in Paris working as a fashion and beauty photographer, but constantly on a plane all over the world. However, in the summer I used to base myself at Mondon working whenever I could with the mason to progress the restoration. In

France there is a Napoleonic law which states that all children should receive an equal share of their parents inheritance so there were countless ruined farm buildings dotted around the countryside where one member of the family refused to contribute his share of the roof upkeep, or whatever, and many local buildings had turned into little more than ruins. I used to approach the farmers and ask what they planned to do with their forlorn buildings and in return for a bottle of champagne I would, to their great delight, arrive with a large JCB and several tractors and trailers and remove everything including the stone, the beams and the roof tiles. The local farmers were thrilled and often when I was running out of stone I would receive a call at the eleventh hour from someone who wanted a building removed. I now had piles of unused stones surrounding the property, enough I was sure to build my own Pompeii.

Meanwhile I decided that it was time to get married so I flew to Argentina as I had made up my mind that I wanted to marry an Argentinian. My German agent at the time asked me what I was looking for, and I told her I wanted to marry a girl with dark hair, dark eyes, 27 years old and a painter, and most importantly, someone who wouldn't be jealous of what I do. My previous girlfriend had destroyed some of my pictures in a fit of rage!

I was invited to stay with a model I had been working with and who turned out to be the girlfriend of Guillermo Vilas who at one time had been one of the top tennis players in the world. I had no idea about this but after Christmas we went to Punta del Este where every meal we had was with a small group of close friends and I sat next to Vilas' business manager's wife Candelaria. She was lovely but I asked her if she had a sister, and she replied: 'Well, actually, my sister Celina is 27, a painter, she has dark eyes and dark hair'. I returned to Buenos Aires for my last two days in the country and Candelaria had managed to persuade her sister to grudgingly meet me, saying to her 'He is very nice, just have tea with him you don't have to marry him!'

I met Celina in a cafe and initially she didn't even look at me but as soon as I started to explain about Mondon and draw illustrations of my plans on the napkin she started to pay more attention. We went for a meal and a walk in the park in the pouring rain and I told her there and then that I knew we would spend our life together. And so began our adventure. My initial plans for a ballroom evaporated as it now became more of an epic and often in the night I would scribble a hastily changed idea on an envelope for the mason to work on the next day, often adding little idiosyncrasies as we went along. The tunnel was

designed to have a woman in eighteenth century costume with beehive hair walk through without touching the roof, as in some imagined spectacle.

For my Uncle Mark, who would start his day with two stiff whiskeys, I thought it would be appropriate to have a seat where he could rest on his way down the spiral staircase but instead he designed a room he could sit in, in the shape of a tall bottle with niches for the glasses, currently inhabited by a very content family of bats.

We built a wine cellar with 24 niches, each to contain a dozen bottles and another set of niches above to be lit by candles and a door at the end for future tunnelling. Another architect uncle, who had built the last castle in Wales a few years before, had asked me what I wanted for a wedding present and I had decided that I would ask him to copy the three gargoyles currently on an arched gate in the local village after having been pillaged during the Revolution. He was thrilled to comply, so we built a domed room from which the tunnel, wine cellar and the rest of the building could be accessed with plans to employ Blott Kerr Wilson (http://www.blottshellhouses.com) the godmother of our eldest daughter Paloma who specialises in shell grottoes, though this never came to pass.

Each summer we would work in blazing sun, lugging monstrously heavy stones around while the bureaucracy of France was on holiday, or so we believed, and therefore unaware of what we were up to. I started to dream of the moment I could plunge into an enormous pool, but I would tremble every time a helicopter could be heard in the distance for fear of being discovered, so worried was I about the petty-fogging snoopers! We built a room in the shape of a four leaf clover *Salle du Trèfle à Quatre Feuilles,* a bath inside an igloo shaped building within another building, all lit from above, bedrooms for our ever expanding family and a potential kitchen. One day just before we were ready to pour soil on the top of the construction to disguise the building, I received a call from some friends who were borrowing the house. 'I think you should come down from Paris, the Historic Buildings authority have landed in a helicopter and stopped all work. Your mason Dominique is being held by the police.'

Fortunately I had a very good local friend, an architect called Charlotte David who had worked with the Head of the Monuments

Historiques and knew he loved good wine so she invited him to lunch and subsequently to tea with us where we were asked to take him on a tour. Half way through he turned to Celina and me and told us a story of a man who had built illegally on protected sand dunes and had been asked to return everything to the way it was. Celina burst out in tears at our possible fate, but he told me the fact that I was English did not mean I should not obey the rules and as a gesture he asked me to put together a retrospective planning application. So my scribbles on the back of envelopes were converted to official documents and after a long protracted wait we received a letter telling us that what we had done was illegal and that in normal circumstances we would receive a fine of 100,000 euros. A week later we received another letter, congratulating us on the incredible work and giving us three conditions to comply with. 'We ask you not to plant any more cypress or olive trees as they are not from the region and next time you do something, just let us know.' We were thrilled, EVERYTHING was now legal.

THE PROPERTY

Set in ten acres, the property consists of a farmhouse built in 1830, various outbuildings, including a guard's tower at the entrance with a cupola, a pigeonnier and a ruined chapel. The house presently has three very large bedrooms, each 36 square metres, a shower room, bathroom, a 60 square metre kitchen living room, but much more can be converted. It also has accommodation in the pigeonnier.

But the real jewel of the property, inspired by the bath houses in Pompeii and Herculaneum, is the underground house, accessed via the top of a building in the courtyard disguised as a ruin (actually housing a bedroom and bathroom) down through an eight metre-high spiral staircase leading down to a tunnel in stone, which we built over a period of ten years to evade the Monuments Historiques authorities. Inside there are three potential bedrooms, two potential bathrooms, of which one has a built-in bath inside an egg shaped building within a building, and the aforementioned living room in the shape of a four-leaf clover, as well as a kitchen, all lit from above.

Now all legal and with the blessing of the authorities. All it needs is an inspired and inspiring person to carry on and take this wonderful property to another level. There are shaped mulberry, fig, lime and apple trees, espaliered limes in the courtyard, 200 green oaks for cultivating truffles at their roots, countless cypress trees at the present time and

of course a 25 metre swimming pool surrounded by a Nymphaeum, unfinished as the builders ran off with our money! The property is surrounded by twelfth-century, seven-metre-high fortress walls. It is ten minutes drive from the town of Richelieu and half way between Tours and Poitiers airports, with flights from London Stansted. We have a number of historic papers relating to the property.

A snip at **825,000 euros** (£600,000 approx.). See it at: www.french-property.com/vp/nv/id/552382. The agent is Rivard Immobilier (www.rivard-immobilier.com) run by David Rivard, Savill's representative in the Loirte, e-mail d.rivard@rivard-immobilier.com / tel. +00 33 613375707

P.s. November 2016: We had to take the house off the market this summer due to a mains water flood; the equivalent of 10 swimming pools went through the house! But all dried out now. The breeze block walls in the underground rooms have all been rendered and the place looking wonderful. It is now on the market again at the reduced the price of 799,000 euros.

(Any rumour that FF will receive a 10% finder's fee on completion of sale are completely without foundation!)
Marvel at the wonderful world of Hugh Arnold at www.hugharnold.com including some stunning photos of nudes swimming underwater!

[2016: Hugh Arnold's Mondon Castle tunnels and nympheum at Marigny Marmande (37) are our second most favourite folly in France (after Palais Idéal in Hauterives by Ferdinand Cheval). FiF II has Hugh's sketch for the nympheum on the cover, and we described the site on FiF;70,71 after our visit in 2008, as seen on FiF;195.-PRB]

ADDENDA

In order to make later updates of the Appendix and the Addenda easier we thought it better to divide these into two separate documents with the publication of Journal 15 in December 2016. Therefore you will not find the updated Addenda of 2011 at the end of this updated Appendix, but a link to the separate 2016 version of the Addenda on the Folly Fellowship's website.

ADDENDA to Follies in France, Scratching the Surface