



The Ruins of the Gothic Gatehouse at Hardwick Park prior to restoration – photo: Harvey Neve

Hardwick Park, Sedgfield County Durham

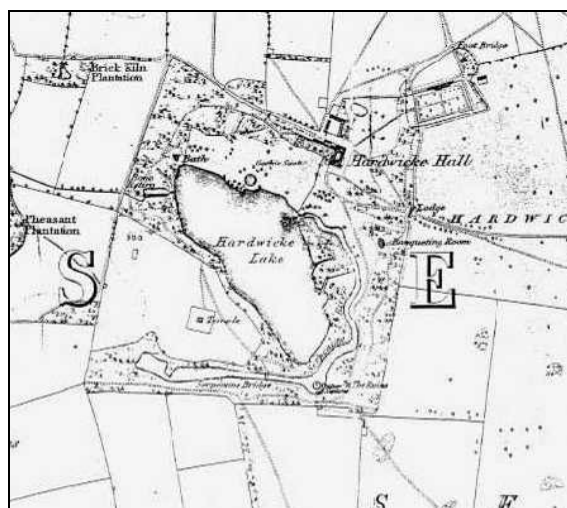
Soon after John Burdon purchased the 150-acre Hardwick estate in 1748, he set about reshaping it as part of a major enhancement of the landscape. The name of his gardener is not known, although Burdon, who was the son of a Newcastle merchant and who made a fortune in his own right as a merchant on Tyneside, was able to afford some of the best craftsmen operating in the area at the time. What emerged from all this has long been heralded as one of the finest examples of an eighteenth century park in Britain.

Work on the park began in 1754 and was finished in 1757. By then it had been completely transformed with the formation of a 16-acre lake supplied by a serpentine river, and the addition of Palladian and Gothick follies designed by James Paine (1717-89). These were enhanced by painters like Samuel Wade, Giuseppe Borghis and Francis Hayman, and the stuccoist Giuseppe Cortese.

Thirty years after the work was completed, the local



historian William Hutchinson was the first to draw attention to the similarities that existed between Hardwick and many of William Kent's design principles noted in Horace Walpole's *History of the Modern Taste in Gardening* (1780). Similarities have also been drawn to the great landscapes at Stourhead (Wiltshire), and to both Studley Royal (Yorkshire) and Painshill Park (Surrey). It is surprising, therefore, that Hardwick is not better known, although this may in part be due to its geographic location, and to its ruined state caused by many decades of vandalism and neglect.



In addition to his many ornamental buildings, James Paine designed an elegant Palladian Villa for the site, but it was never executed. This did not detract from the excitement that surrounded the opening of the park, nor stop visitors from travelling many miles to see it. To help them understand the park, and much like Kent had done at Rousham, a circuit walk was developed to show off all that Hardwick Park had to offer, starting at the Lodge and ending at the Banqueting House. The Friends of Hardwick have recorded that route on their web-site, and is recreated below:

1. Starting on the Grand Terrace, the first of the follies is the **Tuscan Temple** or Alcove set against a tall brick garden wall. It is one of only two listed buildings on the site (the remainder being too fragmentary to warrant listing), and is listed in grade II. It is clearly intended as a place in which to sit and enjoy a panorama of the park in front of viewer, including most of the follies.



2. The **Bathhouse** (now gone) stood at the western end of the Grand Terrace among a group of trees, and a few metres from the north-west corner of the lake. It was a Palladian building with an open portico supported on Doric columns, and was intended to close the vista at the end of the Terrace. It was also a place for medicinal therapy in the plunge pool, and to enjoy quiet retirement in one of the two salons located on either side: the other was where breakfast was taken.



The elegant Palladian building was captured in a photograph taken around 1900 and shows its central pediment supported on Doric columns and with a carved cartouche and tympanum embracing what must have been Burdon's family coat of arms. A poem of 1811 explains the garden tour recalling:

*You then instinctive round the basin wind,
Down the long slope with eager steps inclin'd,
To where the bathing house, with easy seats,
A stranger to his wish accommodates;
Attended by a Genius of the place,
Its various beauties one by one to trace:
The stucco here can boast a master's hand,
Tho too expos'd, the weather to withstand.
Rooms open, to undress, on either side;
The bath is from that spacious lake supply'd;
A grove behind excludes the glaring light,
And screens a bather from each mortal's sight.*

Inside the portico was a bust of Diana, the Roman Goddess of the hunt who legend tells us would often bathe in the woods. A guidebook of 1800 mentions that the more important decoration was located inside the building, including a picture on the bedroom fireplace showing 'Apollo leaning on his lyre with the Muses washing his feet', and above it a plaster relief of Neptune's head with a scroll of shells and flowers. Some commentators have drawn similarities between Hardwick's bathhouse and the one erected at Gibside for George Bowes in 1733. That too stood in a semi-enclosed woodland setting facing the Derwent Valley and with a richly stucco interior created by Francesco Vassalli in 1734-35.

3. A winding path takes the visitor from the site of the bathhouse to the western corner of the park, where William Hutchinson noted in 1787 that there were a number of '*works in the style of the last age, placed here to give the contrast between the polished taste of the present times and the rural ornaments which delighted our ancestors.*' They are believed to have been fragments from the ruins of the old manor house at Hardwick and positioned by Burdon to suggest a long ancestral link with the site.



It was here that the **Bono Retiro** stood on a raised mound. A photograph taken of the building in 1956 (above) begins to show that it was a five-bay Gothic building formed of rendered brick and

stone rubble with sandstone dressings and a line of pointed-arch windows. Placed centrally on the front elevation was a pediment with a quatrefoil opening flanked on either side by a square tower with arched and quatrefoil windows, each standing taller than the central section. Like other features of the park, it was intended to increase the sense of nostalgia of a medieval past, and suggest that Burdon's family had a longer association with the site than was actually true.



In front of the building was a dam that hid from view part of the lake, with a cascade flowing from it. A large mirror placed within the door to the Bono Retiro was intended to reflect this scene and give the visitor the sense of walking through the reflected cascade into a fantasy world beyond. In fact, what was inside was Burdon's library lit by stained glass set in the windows, and containing a number of features that the 1800 guidebook says was *'so foul to behold that what they are is not to be told.'* It was for this reason that only selected visitors were allowed to see inside.

4. Further serpentine footpaths lead away from the Bono Retiro and provide visitors with views over the central lake and back to the mock ruin, and finally arrive at the **Temple of Minerva**. The newly restored folly stands on a small mound and is surrounded by a ha-ha to stop cattle causing damage to the stonework. An inscription inside the original building told that it was begun in 1754 by Master Mason John Bell of Durham, and was completed in 1757, making it one of the first of the follies in the new park.

Dedicated to the goddess of wisdom and patroness of the arts, the temple consists of an 18-foot (5.4 metre) room surrounded by a colonnade of twenty Ionic columns and is topped with an octagonal light and lead-covered dome crowned by a stone urn. Each face is identical, with a central window or door flanked by niches on either side of the main walls and originally filled with busts of the great artists of history, including Dryden, Homer, Horace, Johnson, Milton, Pope, Shakespeare and Virgil, all said



to have been formed in plaster by the great John Cheere of London.

The interior consists of a single room that was originally decorated with a rich mixture of Palladian and Rococo features, and a marble floor. There were said to be more busts of Socrates, Plato, Demosthenes, Julius Caesar, Titus, Marcus Brutus, Trajan and Antoninus Pius, all supported on brackets around the walls, and with a further bust of Minerva herself over the pedimented entrance. The walls were also applied with stucco medallions to represent the four seasons, probably by Giuseppe Cortese, and depicting the four arts (architecture, music, painting and sculpture) and cardinal virtues (fortitude, justice, prudence and temperance), all set in rococo frames cast in the plaster. Above these, the dome was frescoed by Giuseppe Borgnis and his son, showing Minerva with the Gorgon Shield, with the arts and sciences at her feet and Apollo offering her a laurel wreath.



5. The path from here led to a **Rustic Seat** and then to the **Gothic Bridge** set over the serpentine river. This elegant elliptical-arched bridge was the creation of James Paine and was built in 1754 by John Bell. It served two purposes, taking visitors across the river and giving them their first view of the **Statue of Neptune**.



The lead statue originally stood on a small circular island that was set where the serpentine river broadens and turns northwards in front of the ruin. Neptune himself bears a close resemblance to one erected in Durham's Market Place in 1730 (now in London), and was probably by Andries Carpentière working in the studio of Jan van Ost and John Cheere. The original statue disappeared at some time after 1945, so the present figure is a good copy.

The 1811 poem details the scene, saying:

And cross a bridge no less for use than state,
Beneath, an artificial river glides,
Which in the grove at hand its sources hides,
By verdant slopes, its course directing straight,
Towards that mimic ruin on the height:
Neptune enrag'd his trident seems to shake,
And turns its stream meandering to the lake.
You leave it where the bank begins to bend,
And to the ruin up the hill ascend:
That tower, when at the height, may well command,
Extensive prospects, both by sea and land,
If at the base you pause, with walking spent,
And view objects round a wide extent,
The landscape pleases; right beneath your feet,
The river, bridge, and grove, in contract meet.

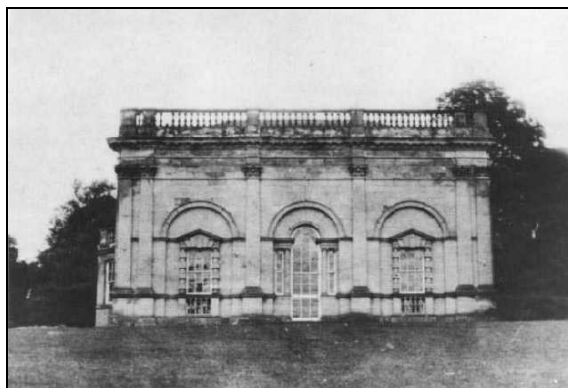
6. The **Gothick Gatehouse** is Hardwick's best known folly, and is often referred to as The Ruin. It was designed as a sham ruin in 1764 by James Paine and given immediate authenticity by re-using stone taken from the ruins of the fourteenth century Guisborough Priory. At one time the main section of the building was two-storeys high (right), but most of it was lost and has not been restored. Instead the main focus of attention has been the circular tower, now known as Durham's Leaning Tower of Pisa because it is said to be 100mm out of vertical.



7. The last of the conceits and the centrepiece of the original garden was the **Banqueting House**,

designed by James Paine at some time around 1755-60. It stood on rising ground with a long lawn to the front and was enveloped by dense woods at the back. To all outward appearances it was a regulation building in the Palladian style, adhering to all the usual rules of proportion and detail. Its purpose, contrary to many of the other buildings in the park which signalled a long ancestral heritage on the site, the banqueting house allowed Burdon to demonstrate that he was a man of good taste and learning, and someone who understood fully the finesse of Classical architecture.

In a photograph taken in 1900 (below), the style of the building suggests that it was based on Inigo Jones's Banqueting House at the Whitehall Palace (completed in 1622), although comparisons have also been made to Colen Campbell's Banqueting House at Studley Royal (c.1729) which has both a similar plan and setting. The windows also echo the work of James Gibbs. Fortunately, Paine's original drawings are held in the Durham County Records Office and show the addition of statues positioned along the roof balustrade, each centred on the pilasters below, but they were long gone by the time the photograph was taken.



Unusually, the interior was accessed from the rear of the building via a small anteroom, which the 1800 guidebook described as being lined with green baize trimmed with gilt, and furnished with a bust of Momus (the Greek god of blame and mockery). Beyond this was a large room that was given depth and richness through the liberal use of plaster mouldings and features, many of which were also picked out in gold leaf. There were also further busts of great Classical architects like Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, Andrea Palladio and Inigo Jones, who is regarded as the first architect of any significance in Britain and the man who introduced us to Palladianism in the seventeenth century. It was also where Burdon elected to place his own portrait above the marble fireplace lined with jasper columns. The painting was created in 1779 by Martin Quadal, and includes a view of Sedgfield Church through an archway in the background.

The interior of the building must have been a spectacular sight because the 1800 guidebook tells how the visitor would be '*struck with the magnificence and splendour which everywhere prevail in this noble apartment.*' The 1811 poem of the gardens also described it by saying:

But see that sumptuous edifice at hand,
Which seems the whole plantation to command;
To be conducted, o'er the lawn you haste.
The architecture of exquisite taste.

It breathes an air of luxury and state;
To know its use you with impatience wait,
Skirting its wings towards the postern gate,
This it is the hall for banquets set apart;
Its grandeur strikes, enrich'd with cost and art;
Above two rival painters have display'd
Amazing powers, contrasting light and shade.

Jove's succour, Thetis, here a suppliant seeks,
Achilles to revenge upon the Greeks
Juno, behind a cloud, observes the God,
Yield to her suit, with all-sufficient nod;
Attendant Nereids, which compose her train,
Wait there to reconduct her to the main.
Full in the midst, among ambrosial bowers,
Jove, at a feast, regales the heavenly powers.

By Juno charged with fav'ring Thetis' suit,
Both storm till Vulcan settles the dispute;
With limping pace cross Heavens' carpet trod,
He moves to laughter each attendant God;
Jove's wrath abates, half smiling at the jest,
Yet scarce the termagant will lower her crest;
But with averted face the grace cup takes,
And at the thunderer her sceptre shakes.

How chang'd the Goddess, where in her conference seen
She comes a suppliant to the Cyprian Queen;
Quitting, by peacocks drawn, her stately car,
And feigning business from her purpose far,
Her artful tale the Queen of beauty moves,
To favour Juno reigning in her doves.

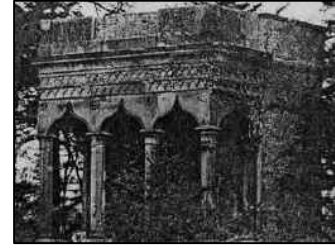
The Goddess with her Cestus was dismiss'd,
Whose force great love himself could not resist;
Soundly he slept unmindful of his state,
Hector's disgrace, and Troy's impending fate.

Farther to decorate this sumptuous hall,
Cupid and Psyche's loves adorn the wall;
A genius both to Hymans alter leads;
Here Bacchus revels with his merry blades.
Busts of intriguing women make the room,
An air of festive luxury assume:
While these artists famous for their taste;
Check the lascivious glare, or wish unchaste.
There where Luna woos to her embrace,
Sleeping Endymion weary with the chase.

At the spread couch loose ideas rise,
Turn, and on Virgil's image fix thine eyes;
Who scorned, tho' Dido's love so high he wrought.
To raise a blush for one immodest thought,
More company impatient for a sight,
Force you to quit this mansion of delight;

The banqueting house formed the final stop on the official tour, and a place where drinks and iced fruit desserts could be served on hot summer evenings. This suggests that there was an ice-house nearby, but no record of one exists.

7. There were at least two other buildings that did not appear of the official tour. The first of these was the **Grotto**, which stood on the peninsular between the Serpentine River and the lake, and provided a place of contemplation and solitude. The other was a **Gothic Seat** (above), which stood at the western end of the Grand Terrace and was fronted by a circular pond.



Like many of the follies at Hardwick the seat had suffered from neglect and vandalism, with the result that very little of it remained visible above ground. Fortunately, some of the more decorative stonework had been buried nearby to prevent it from being stolen, so during the recent renovation of the park it was retrieved, cleaned, repaired and returned to the then re-built folly.



When he bought the estate in 1748, John Burden paid £10,800 for it. In 1791, after he had completed all of his alterations, he sold it to William Russell for only £40,000. Russell then continued to improve the park by extending it towards Sedgfield and maintaining all of Burden's achievements. Sixty years later, thanks to the site being tenanted and split up, the house and garden began its path of decline. On the whole, however, the follies were still largely in tact at the start of World War II, making it even more curious why Barbara Jones should have omitted it from her book *Follies and Grottoes* (first published in 1953). That decay was slowed in 1972 when Durham County Council acquired the south-eastern portion of the site and used it as a country park.

At that time the County Council began a limited programme of restoration with small grants provided by the Countryside Commission, but the work was slow because of the overall shortage of appropriate funding. Only when the park gained conservation area (ten years ago) could it attract the sort of grant that was needed, something that has been continued with the aid of a multi-million pound grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The restoration work is being completed by the builders William Anelay Limited of York and Manchester.

Hardwick Park Visit

Saturday, 8 November 2008

A tour of Hardwick Park has been arranged for Saturday, 8 November. Our guides are Tony Smith of Durham County Council, who has been involved at the park since the start of the restoration work, and Tom Stubbs of the Friends of Hardwick Park who campaigned to save the park from total ruin. Tickets are £10 for members and £12 for guests, and include coffee and biscuits at Hardwick Hall Hotel. Visits to other Durham follies will take place on Sunday 9 November. Further details are available from Karen Lynch at lynch.k@tiscali.co.uk.

Folly of the Month: London's Grade I Listed Lavatory, Greenwich

In the 1630s, anyone who was anyone lived in Greenwich, in what is now south-east London. It was the favourite home of the Tudor and Stuart royal family who lived in the Palace of Greenwich, (now the site of the Old Royal Naval College) and was where Inigo Jones built the Queen's House for Queen Anne, introducing Palladian architecture to Britain for the first time. All around it, members of the court circle built houses to be close to the King, one of whom was Sir Adam Newtown who in 1607 commissioned the building of Charlton House from John Thorpe, one of the first of the professional English architects. Sir Adam was then the Dean of Durham and one of the tutors to Prince Henry, the eldest son of James I, so his close proximity to the royal household was important.



Built over a period of five years, Charlton House was an impressive Jacobean mansion in which Sir Adam and Lady Newton liked to entertain their friends. To help with this they built a summerhouse on the edge of their garden, probably to use as a banqueting house and gazebo.



Much confusion surrounds all aspects of the folly, including its date, architect and true purpose. The popular story is that it was designed by Inigo Jones in 1630, which is possible given that he was working on the Queen's House at the same time and would have been in constant attendance at the Royal Palace. There is also some weight to the suggestion that it was by John Thorpe, although the use of Classical ornament in the rubbed brickwork suggests a different and more knowledgeable hand like Jones. Date-wise, Sir Adam died in 1630 and his wife in 1629, so the commonly accepted date seems a little late. It is often believed that the Mulberry tree standing next to the summerhouse was planted in 1607 when James I asked all of his noble friends to do the same. Again, the popular view is that it would have been odd to have planted the tree so close to a building that was planned or about to be executed at that time. Clearly too, if it had been by Thorpe and was part of his master-plan for the site, it would have followed the same architectural style as the main house. As a result, the intelligent assessment is that the building was erected at some time between 1625 and 1629, and was probably by Jones because it echoes some of the details that he would have studied during his trips to Rome and Greece.



In the beginning the summerhouse was probably used as a gazebo from which Sir Adam and Lady Newton could watch the royal barge and other boats making their way up and down the Thames. It may also have served as an Orangery, and as a banqueting house in which picnics would have been taken. In more recent times, however, it provided a base for the Charlton Village Guard in the early nineteenth century, and then in the 1930s suffered the indignity of being converted to a public lavatory. Even that use has now ceased, leaving the grade I listed lavatory closed. There are no plans to re-open the building or convert it to a more dignified use.



Follies in County Durham

Grouse Obelisk
Barningham

Deer House and Gatehouse
Bishop Auckland

Cow House
Burn Hall

Riverside Park
Chester-le-Street

Cleadon Chimney
Cleadon (Tyne and Wear)

Hallgarth Deer House
Coatham Mundeville

Clock Tower and Grotto
Darlington

The Count's House, Needle's Eye and Salvin Obelisk
Durham

Edleston Hall Column
Gainford

Rokeby Hall Cave, Urn and Grotto
Greta Bridge

Pinnacle and Summerhouse
Hamsterley

Sailor's Hall Tower
Hawthorn

Pasmore Pavilion
Peterlee

Column of British Liberty and Gibside Banqueting House
Rowlands Gill (Tyne and Wear)

Hardwick Hall Folly Group
Sedgefield

Pigeon Palace
Shildon

Marsden Grotto
South Shields

Raby Castle Folly
Staindrop

Penshaw Monument and Victoria Viaduct
Washington (Tyne and Wear)

Westerton Folly
Westerton

Long John Monument
Whickham (Tyne and Wear)

Barnes's Folly
Whitburn (Tyne and Wear)

Lodges, Dovecote Tower and Gazebo
Witton Castle

Obelisk and Temples
Wynyard Park (Cleveland)

From: H&M Follies, Aurum Press (1999)

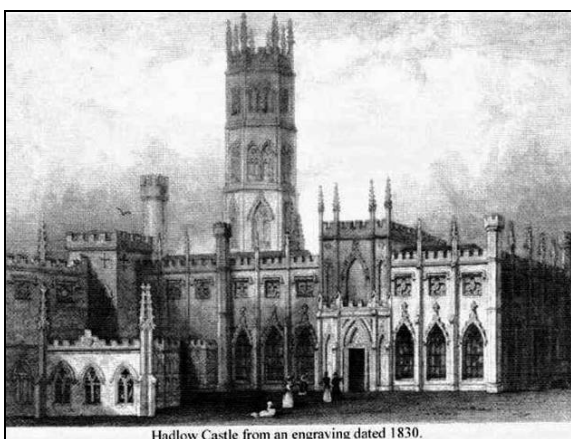
Gobbets:

Hadlow Tower, Kent – From the day that we first launched the Fellowship almost twenty-three years ago, we have been worried about the future of Squire Walter May's Folly at Hadlow. During that time we have seen rescue plans come and go, been included in many discussions that have taken place with various interested parties, and seen the lantern removed on safety grounds. We have also sat through many meetings with its owner, Bernd-Michael Kießler, and listened patiently to his usually ambitious plans for rescuing the tower that he says he loves. So, when news reached us last month about another rescue plan, it was difficult to know whether we should treat it with happiness or the usual scepticism.

The main difference with the current scheme is that Tonbridge and Malling Council appears to be willing to serve a Compulsory Purchase Order on Michael Kießler, so it can be transferred to The Vivat Trust in a back-to-back deal. To many people Michael is the reason why the tower is in the state that it is, and it is certainly true that he has done nothing to endear himself to the local community by hosting a regular series of sex parties there, all openly advertised on the internet. In his defence, Michael has told us on numerous occasions that he lost a sizable sum in a business deal that went wrong, and has been struggling to make ends meet ever since. It is certainly clear that he doesn't have the resources needed to carry out the repairs that are desperately needed.



Inspired by William Beckford's masterpiece at Fonthill, Hadlow Tower is a majestic prospect tower in the Gothic Revival style and was built in 1835-38 for Squire Walter May. It was remodelled in 1840 by George Ledwell Taylor, when the lantern to the tower was added, and is still said to be the tallest surviving Gothic folly in England. Among the many legends that are associated with the building, it is said that May's wife left him for a man who lived in the next village and he built the tower knowing she would see it and forever be reminded of her act. It has also been claimed that May wanted to out-do William Beckford, that he wanted to watch ships on the Thames from the lantern (a feat that is impossible), and even wanted to be entombed above ground level to defy an old prophecy that said the property would pass out of his family when he was buried.



Hadlow Castle from an engraving dated 1830.

In the latest rescue plan, the Vivat Trust has been asked to raise £2-million towards the cost of the repairs, so it can be added to the money that has been promised by the Heritage Lottery Fund. At that point the council will issue the Compulsory Purchase Notice. Vivat Trust's fundraiser seems confident that £1-million will be raised by the end of this year, and there is even ambitious talk of work commencing next summer. Unusually, the people of Hadlow have been told that they need to raise £500,000 towards the target cost of £4.5-million, plus a further £60,000 to pay for the display boards to explain the history of the tower.

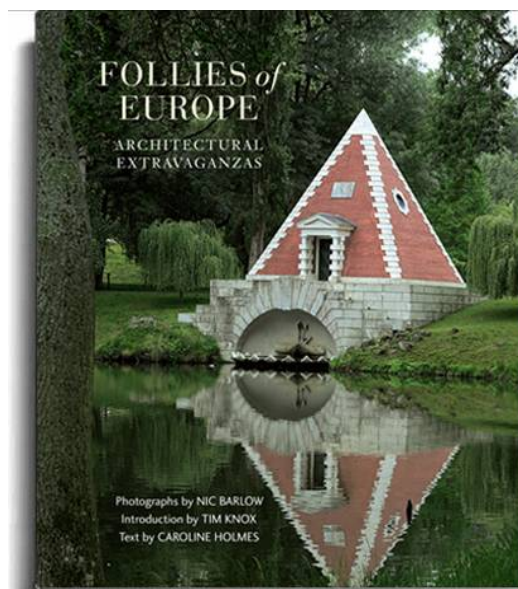


Assuming that the money can be raised in time, and that the council is able to complete the CPO process, the plan is to restore the tower to its full height, reinstate the lantern (removed at a cost of £100,000), restore the Roman Cement features that once decorated the exterior, and convert the building to holiday accommodation for a maximum of six people. At the same time, the public will be allowed to visit the tower for 28 days each year and climb to the top to enjoy views over the Weald.

If you would like to help the village raise its share of the repair costs, you can do so by sending donations to Vivat Trust at 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ. If you do, please remember to do two things: firstly, make clear that the donation is for the Hadlow Tower Fund, and secondly, fill out a gift aid declaration form so the tax benefits can be reclaimed. Further information is available from Alice Yates at Vivat Trust, and the Hadlow Tower Action Group at <http://savehadlowtower.com>.

Other Events:

02 August – 29 October 2008 – This is your last chance to see Nic Barlow's exhibition of photographs of European Follies at Petworth House, West Sussex. The exhibition will then move to Hove Museum and Art Gallery from 24 January to 3 May 2009.



26 October 2008 – The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust is visiting the gardens at Hall Barn, Beaconsfield, where the Trust was launched 11 years ago. The gardens featured in the recent BBC drama *Miss Austen Regrets*, and represent a very specific type of early eighteenth century pleasure grounds but on a surprisingly large scale. Tickets are available from Rosemary Jury (11 Fledglings Walk, Winslow, Buckinghamshire MK18 3QU or 01296 715491) and cost £10 for BGT members and £12 for others.



21 February 2009 – The Spring Talks season hosted by the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust includes a lecture by Peter Howell on decorative arches in gardens. His talk entitled: *"Turn Arches of Triumph to a Garden Gate": arches as features of gardens*, takes place at 2.30pm at The Plant Centre, Waddesdon Manor. Tickets are £8 for BGT members and £9 for others, and are available from Rosemary Jury.

Picture credits: *Banner* – Harvey Neve; *Hardwick Park Follies* – Sedgfield Borough Council, www.keystothePast.info, The Friends of Hardwick (www.communicate.co.uk/ne/friendsofhardwick), and William Anelay Ltd; *Charlton House* – www.greenwich.gov.uk; *Charlton Summerhouse* – Steve Cadman and www.thegreenwichphantom.co.uk; *Hadlow Tower* – www.edu-tainment-at-your-fingertips.blogspot.com. Other pictures by the editor or from the Folly Picture Library: our grateful thanks to all for the use of their excellent pictures.