RUKSAR ALI

# THE CULTURE AND HISTORY OF FONTHILL, WILTSHIRE

VOL 2

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The Culture and History of Fonthill, Wiltshire: Vol 2
Ruksar Ali
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# Discourses

# 1

# Geophysical Survey: A Powerful Tool for Studying the Fonthill

David Roberts

In November 2016, the PASt Landscapes team[1] undertook magnetometry and resistivity survey in fields west of Fonthill Lake, in order to attempt to locate the first stately home on the Fonthill estate, built by Sir John Mervyn, and its redeveloped form, occupied by the Cottingtons and Alderman Beckford (see OS map Figure 1.1; see also Chapter 3 Figures 3.8, 3.15, 3.18 and 3.20).

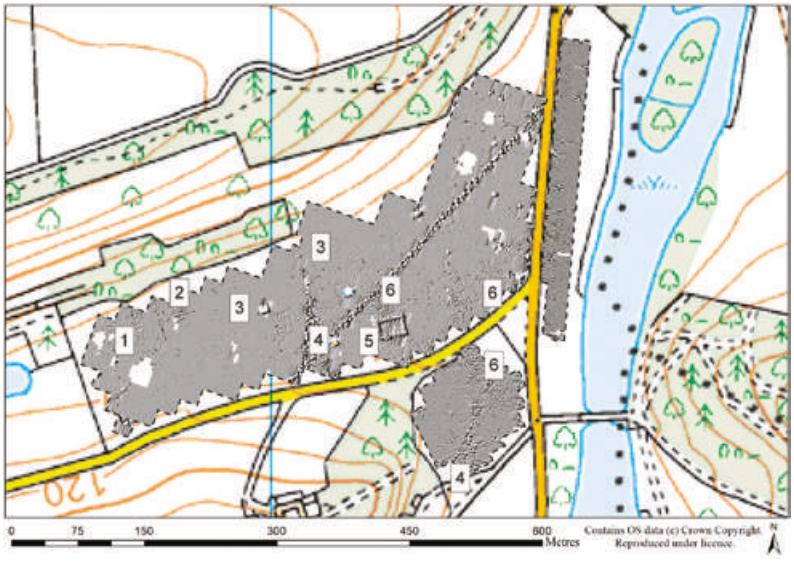
## Magnetometry survey

Magnetometry measures the magnetic field of subsurface deposits, allowing deposits with enhanced magnetic properties such as ditches, rubbish pits and hearths to be differentiated from less magnetic geological layers. Resistivity survey measures the electrical resistance of subsurface deposits; ditches are more conductive and less resistant than geological strata, as the soil contained therein is moister, whereas walls are considerably less conductive and more resistant, as their stone prevents the easy flow of electricity.

The magnetometry survey covered most of the modern cricket field, a long transect of the lakeside field running north from immediately east of the cricket pitch, and most of the large field running west up the dry valley west of the lake, north of the cricket pitch (see Figure 9.1).

The earliest features demonstrated by magnetometry were the fragmented remains of the ploughed-out banks of a later prehistoric or Roman field system. Like many others in the area, the field system consisted of fairly small rectangular fields separated by fairly broad banks, and would have been used for a mixed agricultural regime. A trackway down the centre of the dry valley running west from the lake may also have originated in this period.

The magnetometry also showed a large spread of disturbed ground with raised magnetic response across the south-eastern quadrant of the large field. In




1 Curving garden wall built by William Beckford
2 Site of cottage built by James Morrison
3 Remnants of late prehistoric/Roman field system
4 Modern pipelines or drains
5 Rectangular structure c. 30m x 20m possibly railings
6 Areas of increased magnetic response

**Fig. 9.1** Minimally processed annotated greyscale plot of magnetometry results, David Roberts.

the western side of this area a series of very high magnetic responses form a rectangular structure. This may be a building, an iron-reinforced structure within a larger building, or an external feature surrounded by iron posts or railings. Without further archaeological investigation it remains a mystery.

Further west a separate series of raised magnetic responses in the base of the valley hints at another fairly large structure, possibly the site of the church demolished by Alderman Beckford. A rectilinear group of responses at the northern edge of the field matches the location of a cottage built by J. B. Papworth for James Morrison, shown on Alfred Morrison's 1878 estate map. A series of curving features matches precisely to the location of the curved wall at the eastern end of the kitchen garden formed by William Beckford and shown on estate maps from 1822 and also 1878 (see Figure 9.2). Finally, a series of modern pipes or drains run across the field in several places.

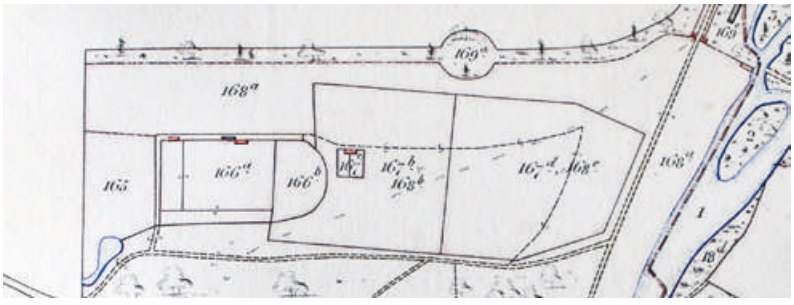


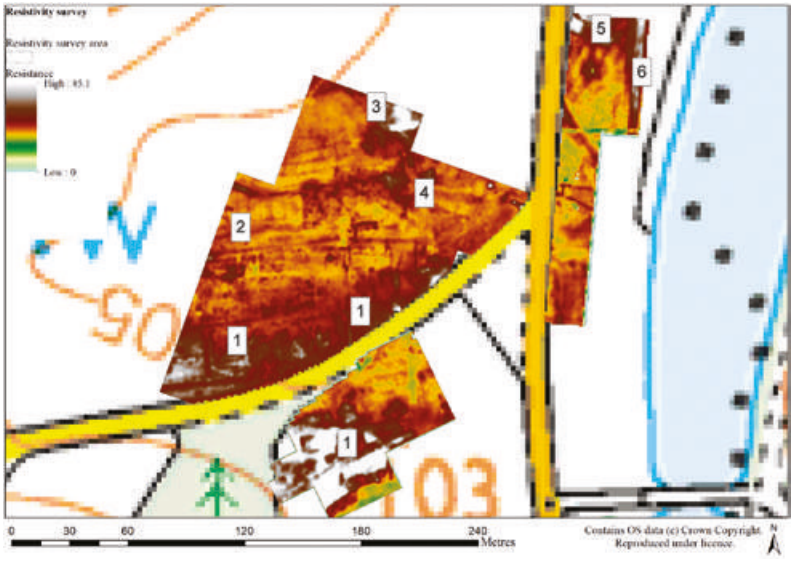

**Fig. 9.2** Detail from 1878 estate map of Fonthill, showing cottage (167c) and garden wall (around 166b) located by magnetometry survey.
Fonthill Estate Archives.

## Resistivity survey

Resistivity survey is more time consuming, and therefore our use of this method focused on the north of the cricket pitch and south-east of the large field, where magnetometry showed most activity (Figure 9.3). The resistivity survey revealed rectilinear high-resistance anomalies across most of the survey area, all on a similar alignment. The highest resistance anomalies represent substantial walling, with the broader high resistance spreads of material likely to be rubble. These features coincide with the large area of raised magnetic response highlighted by magnetometry; the rectangular structure revealed by magnetometry also fits neatly within the areas of structural remains. The corner of a large, separate building was found at the northern edge of the survey area, possibly with buttresses given the shape of the anomaly. Other high-resistance features were found in a narrow strip adjacent to the lake, and likely represent a lakeside wall and a possible small building.

Overall, these results mean that the southern part of the earliest Fonthill House is very likely to be located across the northern edge of the cricket pitch and the woodland immediately east, with the bulk of the building in the south-east quadrant of the large field, probably stopping slightly short of the base of the dry valley.

The multi-phase nature of the house and its robbing for stone and building material for Fonthill 'Splendens' means that the survey results do not match precisely to the available documentary evidence, but the overall alignment and character of the anomalies accord well with evidence from the paintings of ca. 1754; in particular see Chapter 3 Figures 3.18 and 3.20.




1 Large area of structural remains including walls and rubble
2 Possible garden features, walls
3 Large structure, possibly buttressed
4 Square ended building
5 Possible structure
6 Lakeside wall

**Fig. 9.3** Annotated colour-graded plot of resistivity survey results, David Roberts.

The survey has also highlighted the longer-term occupation of the valley, showing its early agricultural use in the later prehistoric and Roman periods, and demonstrating the existence of remains of later structures such as the cottage, other buildings and several garden features.

# 2

# William Beckford's Fonthill: Landscape of English Style

Min Wood

'Nature has been liberal to Fonthill' wrote William Beckford to Humphry Repton, rebuffing the suggestion that he should be engaged to give landscape advice.[1] He was right. The south-west corner of Wiltshire with its rolling chalk downs surrounding rich valleys, watered by gin-clear streams, would without any interventions beyond the 'fold, tackle and plough'[2] of generations of farmers offer as attractive scenes as any to be had in lowland Britain. It is remarkable even by the standard of the Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in which it lies. While our associations and sense of place are often keyed into buildings of the kind described elsewhere in this book, geology is the mother of the landscapes which surround them. It provides the opportunities for, and imposes the limitations on, different forms of land use, on architects, and on would-be improvers. It is geology that determines the availability of building materials, here the out-cropping of Purbeck series freestone, and with that the local vernacular and the architecture of the grander houses. It is geology which governs where and how lakes can be made and where great houses can be built. It is geology that dictates where land can be cultivated and where woodland should take precedence.

## The land

At Fonthill, invisible at a distance, is a narrow seam of fertile greensand, interspersed with small areas of clay, freestone and ironstone. This threads its way along the edge of Salisbury Plain and the chalk downs, allowing rhododendrons, camellias, wood sorrel and other calcifuge plants to grow a short distance from places where the plants and flowers of the alkaline downs, like wild thyme, scabious, bee orchids, old man's beard and juniper flourish. It is along this seam that some of the county's best-known parks and gardens are threaded like jewels. To Bowood, Longleat, Stourhead and Wardour must be added Fonthill.

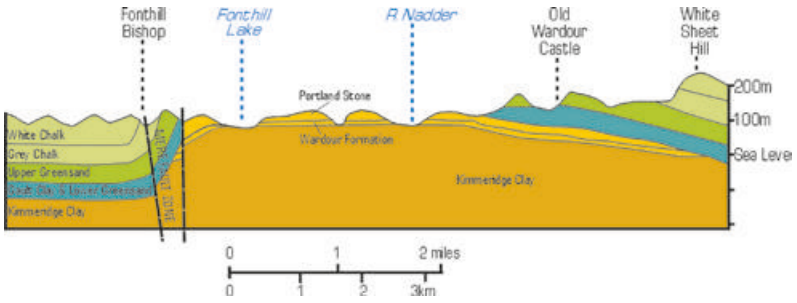



**Fig. 10.1** Geology of the Vale of Wardour.



The geology in the vicinity of Fonthill is particularly complicated. It lies in the area of the Mere Fault. A huge upheaval of the earth's crust, centred on the Mediterranean some 60 million years ago, gave rise to the Alps and lifted up different deposits of rock as far away as Britain. Along the great fault lines this created a patchwork of soils as different rocks and sediments were brought to the surface. In the Nadder Valley this meant, according to Isobel Geddes, that 'the Chalk forms the rounded hills of the downs along either side, with the Greensand below producing ridges either side of the valley of the River Nadder, flowing from its source in the Greensand hills near Shaftesbury to cross Jurassic limestones, sandstones and clays as it makes its way eastward towards its confluence with the Wylye near Salisbury'.[3] A diagram by Geddes illustrates what happened as a result of wind and weather working on the exposed strata ever since (Figure 10.1 and Chapter 2, Figure 2.1). The darker green represents the Upper Greensand. If the section was taken a little to the west it would show the hill behind Splendens and the land within Beckford's Barrier as being two of those greensand ridges (Figure 10.2).

Looking north from Fonthill Bishop to Knoyle Corner Terrace over Hindon the open chalk downs predominate; in the distance is the woodland on the clay cap of Great Ridge. The view southward from Hawking Down shows the fields of the open chalk down giving way abruptly to the greensand along the line of the Terrace. Beyond the Terrace are the more heavily wooded ridges on the greensand of Fonthill. In 1797 the Terrace was bare; [4] there would have been clear views of the landscape on either side.

## Early history

Long before 1560, early human interventions had already done much to shape the pattern of settlements in the area (see Chapters 2 and 3). By 1086, Fonthill Gifford, in which nearly all of Alderman Beckford's 'Old Park' and William Beckford's Abbey grounds now lie, was recorded in the Domesday survey as having seven ploughlands. It was held by Berenger Giffard who had taken over as Lord at some time

**Fig. 10.2** View looking south from Great Ridge towards Fonthill Abbey Woods.


after 1066 in the Norman redistribution of property after the invasion. Fonthill Bishop was in the hands of Wakelin, Bishop of Winchester, another Norman, related to William the Conqueror. This parish also had seven ploughlands.[5]

These figures imply that each settlement, had, even by then, something in the region of 800 acres of ploughable land. Some idea of the productivity of agriculture in the wider area during the Middle Ages can be judged from the size of the Abbess of Shaftesbury's fifteenth-century Tithe Barn at Place Farm, Tisbury. The fertility of the land is recognised in the name Berwick St Leonard, a parish entwined with the history of the two Fonthills. Berwick or Bawick is the Saxon for 'barley field', a grain important for brewing.

There is no information as to how those who occupied the land in the parishes of Fonthill Bishop, Fonthill Gifford, Berwick St Leonard and Hindon gardened before 1560, or whether they set out to make any aesthetic improvements to the landscape through planting, but it can be safely assumed that they enjoyed the well-stocked gardens and orchards necessary for civilised life.[6] This essentially utilitarian approach to gardening was accompanied by the keeping of livestock to provide milk, eggs, clothing and meat. A fish pond would have been an essential component of any substantial manor, not least to meet the statutory requirement to keep 'fish days'.[7] Such a pond, with its island refuge for wildfowl, can be seen in the earliest surviving painting of Fonthill House (Figure 10.3). By 1566, Sir John Mervyn is said to have had a park, a lake, a heronry, woodland, an orchard, a hopyard, a dairy and pasture for sheep and cattle. By 1633 a vineyard had been added to the estate.[8] Practical considerations would have determined the site of the early houses at Fonthill; reasonable gradients, cultivable land and access to water

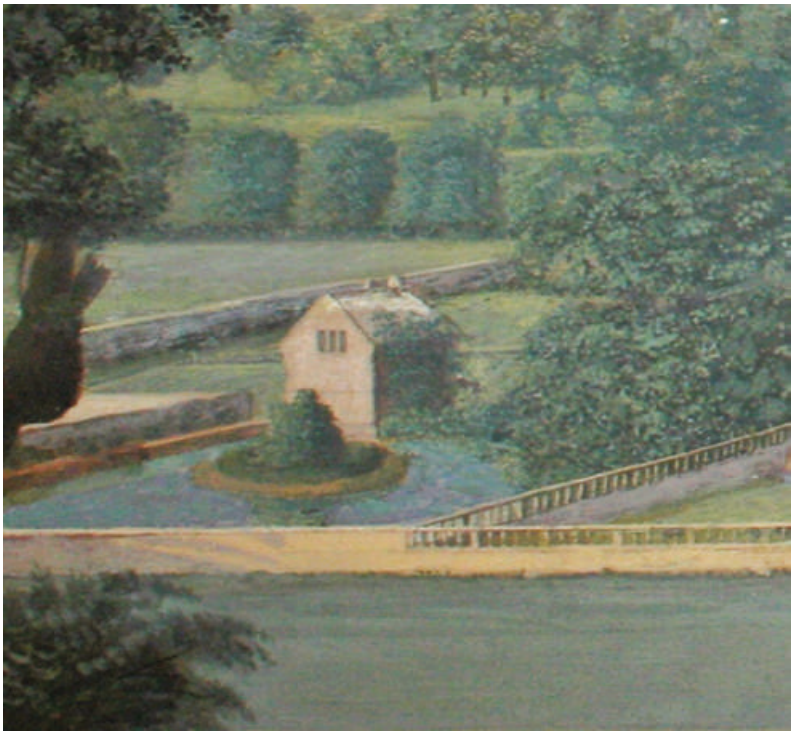


**Fig. 10.3** 'The fish pond', detail from Robert Thacker, *Fonthill House*.
Private collection, photograph © Heather Norville-Day.

supplies, probably from the tributary of the Nadder and the side stream, now culverted, flowing down from the west.

## The Cottington years

It seems that the Cottington households before and after the Restoration, as disclosed by the estate map of ca. 1666, brought a degree of art to the laying out of landscape. The core of that map may be usefully compared with the layout of Sayes Court, Deptford, the home of John Evelyn, in 1673, its parterres contained in regular enclosures (Figures 10.4 and 10.5). Similarly, the early gardens at Longleat and Wilton, although more elaborate, followed the same general model with its genesis in Italian style.

The seventeenth century was a hectic period for the study of horticulture in England.[9] The Oxford Botanic Garden was founded in 1621, the Chelsea Physic Garden in 1673. There were a spate of horticultural publications. Gerard's *Herball* had been published in 1597, followed by John Partridge's *Paradisi in sole paradisus*

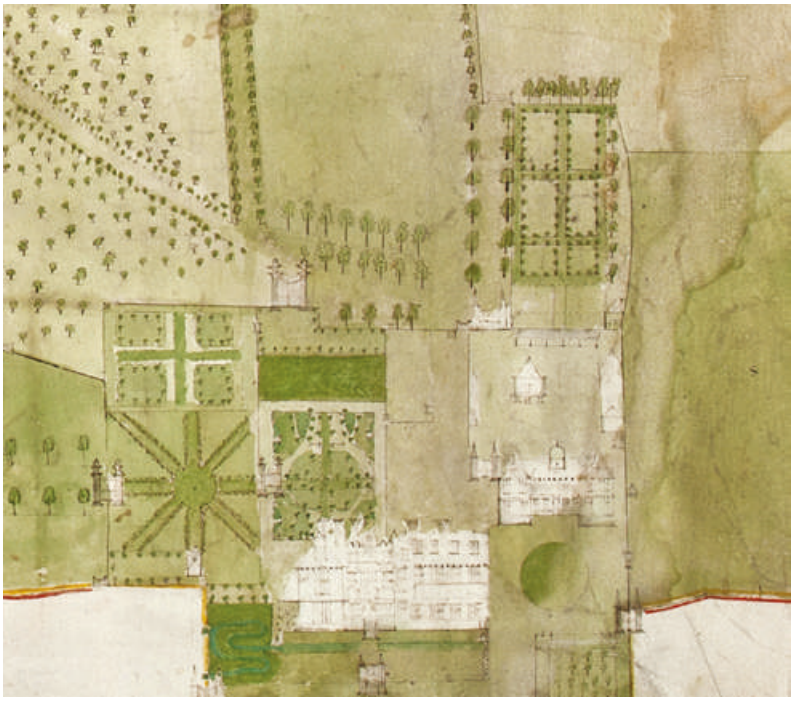


**Fig. 10.4** Detail from Fonthill estate map, ca. 1666.
Private collection, photograph © Jon Stone.

*terrestris* in 1629, and later his *Theatrum Botanicum* in 1640. John Evelyn's *Silva*, which includes his discourse on earth, *Terra,* was published in 1675. Eating habits also changed during this period with meat from domestic animals overtaking the wild sourced ingredients central to the medieval diet. Out went wild boar, lampreys and even cormorants;[10] in came roast beef, pork and lamb, for those who could afford them.[11]

An item of particular interest on the Cottington estate map is the dumbbell-shaped feature set apart from the main gardens of the house, apparently on higher ground, and therefore more nearly on pure greensand (Figure 10.6). This may have been a 'coronary garden'[12] where rare introductions and exotic plants could be grown, as well as a vantage point from which to survey the house and immediate grounds (but see Chapter 3 for alternative uses). It consisted of a straight length of terrace with circular elements at each end. John Evelyn illustrated a similar shape for a 'coronary' garden in his unpublished manuscript *Elysium Britannicum*, written many years before his death in 1706 (Figure 10.7). Later, a rather larger dumbbell was made at Oatlands (by then no longer a Palace), drawn by John Rocque in 1736, so this kind of approach to design could not have been altogether uncommon.[13]

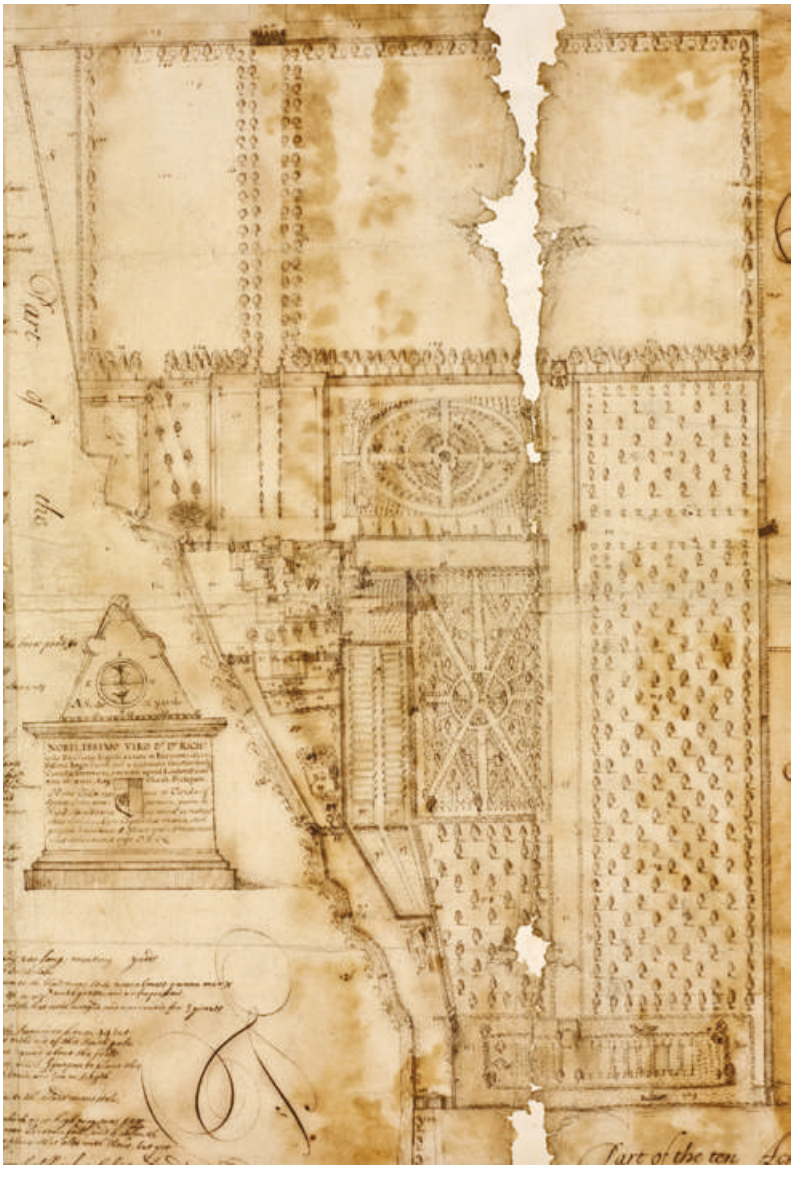


**Fig. 10.5** From the plan of Sayes Court, John Evelyn, 1653.


Fonthill was one of two country houses owned by Lord Cottington: the other was the remains of Henry VIII's Hanworth Palace, near Hounslow. In 1629, three years before he bought Fonthill, Cottington wrote to Lord Strafford about the improvements being made at Hanworth (see Chapter 3). New research based on girth measurements suggests that one of the cedars at Fonthill may date from

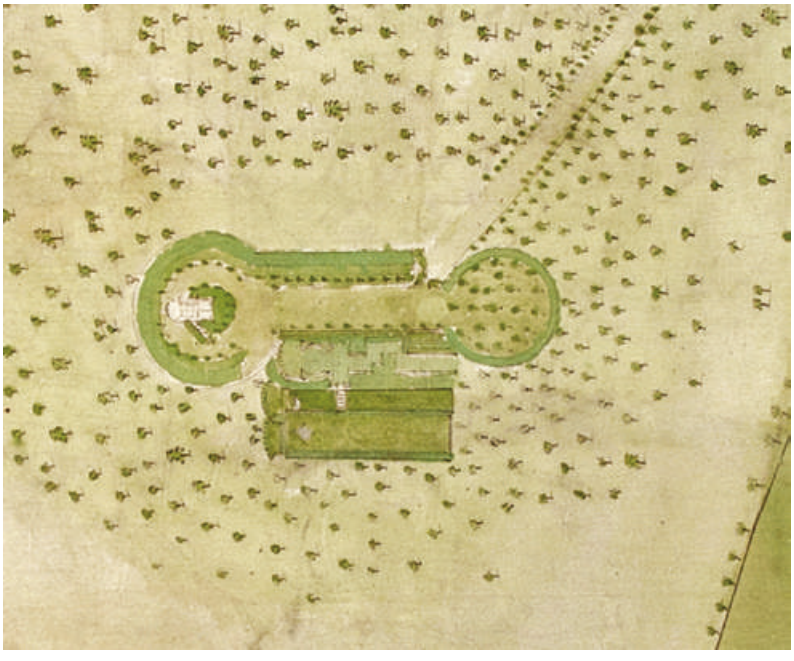


**Fig. 10.6** The 'dumbbell', detail from Fonthill estate map, ca. 1666.
Private collection, photograph © Jon Stone.

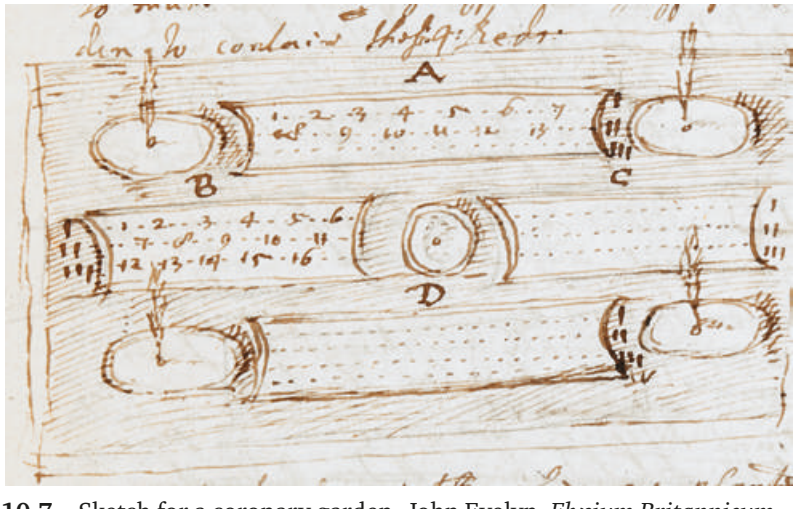



**Fig. 10.7** Sketch for a coronary garden, John Evelyn, *Elysium Britannicum*.
© British Library Board, Add MS 78342-78344.

Cottington's time and therefore be one of those grown from cones brought to England by Edward Pocock[14] in either 1635 or 1640. Pocock certainly gave cones to his brother, who was the chaplain at Wilton, where some were then planted.[15] The dating of trees from girth measurements is notoriously difficult due to their varying growth rates. However, if the suggestion is correct, it would confirm that Cottington had a serious interest in gardening and was keen to take part in the introduction of new species to the English landscape (see Chapter 3 Figure 3.14).

The Cottington estate map of ca.1666 shows both the 'old' and 'new' park at Fonthill. The Italian-inspired enclosed gardens of the kind provided by Isaac de Caux for Wilton are located in the Old Park. The extended avenues in the new park are similar to avenues favoured by the Mollet family of France. André Mollet, a disciple of Le Notre, worked in England after the Restoration; his commissions included forming avenues in St James's Park, in London in 1660–5.

By the time George Lambert painted Fonthill in 1740, the Cottingtons had swept away the Italianate gardens (see Chapter 3 Figure 3.15) and the open park had been brought right up to the house. What appears to be an avenue of limes can still be made out to the south of the house (and left side of the painting). In the painting of Fonthill now attributed to Antonio Joli, commissioned by Alderman Beckford only a decade later, even the avenue to the south has been dismantled (see Chapter 3 Figure 3.18). John Phibbs has written: 'avenues were still regarded in the mid-18th century as European and, still worse, French … their removal would make the nice political and nationalist point that English grassland was so smooth and well drained that one did not need avenues to get across it'.[16]

## Alderman Beckford

The Alderman has been described as a cultural chameleon, cultivating ostentation to further his social and political objectives while actually enjoying a rather more simple life himself.[17] His stroke of genius, and lasting contribution to the Fonthill landscape, was to expand the small tributary of the Nadder into a lake, a process later repeated, even more ambitiously, by his son so that it would have the appearance of a river. The draining of the lake in 2015 to allow dredging has revealed how small the stream running through the Old Park would have been. An extensive sheet of water of the kind achieved by the Alderman brings the sky down to light up the valley in a remarkable way: when the water receded that light was lost. In summer the Nadder flowed only as a small stream, albeit sufficient to power the mill below. Spurred on perhaps by Henry Hoare's achievements at Stourhead, the Alderman filled his park with a rotunda, a temple, a new church built as an eye-catcher, an archway and a five-arched bridge. These appear in the two paintings of Fonthill commissioned by the Alderman and now attributed to Antonio Joli (see Chapter 3 Figures 3.18 and 3.20).

## William Beckford

William Beckford's early years were spent at Fonthill. Forbidden by his mother to play with other children, or to be educated at a school, Beckford would either laze by the lake, dreaming up stories, or make his way to Lawn Farm to be close to nature: 'the bleating of my sheep and the lowing herds in the deep valley of Lawn Farm … these happy scenes of my childhood'.[18] Perhaps this was the early start of a drift away from participation in society. Just as landscapes are governed by their geology so questions of taste and the attitudes of landowners are conditioned by their experiences and associations.

Alderman Beckford did try to embark on the translation within a family of great wealth into political power and influence, a process demonstrated so effectively by the Pitt family. With the Earl of Chatham as one of his closest friends, and his son's godfather, the Alderman must have had dreams of Beckford following that path. His son made an effort, putting on the most extravagant of society occasions for his 21st birthday and attempting a spell as a Member of Parliament. He engaged first John Soane and then James Wyatt to improve 'Splendens' along Neo-classical lines, and removed some of his father's more extravagant features from the park, including the bridge, the rotunda and the temple. William Colt Hoare was making similar changes at Stourhead.[19]

With marriage to Margaret Gordon in 1783 he was brought as close as he would ever come to the life of a typical landed gentleman. Then in 1784, disaster struck. Whatever happened with 'Kitty' Courtenay at Powderham Castle, Beckford was forced to leave the country with his wife and baby daughter Margaret.

They settled in Switzerland, a country Beckford had learnt to love as a teenager in the company of the celebrated Huber family who had taken him under their wing.[20] He had discovered new ways of independent thinking far removed from his mother's strict Presbyterian influence, and was also much influenced by the ideas of the poet and painter of pastoral scenes Salomon Gessner. After an idyllic few months at the Tour de Peilz, a château on the lake a short distance from Vevey, Beckford's wife died on 13 May 1786 following the birth of their second daughter Susan Euphemia (later to become the Duchess of Hamilton). In *Letter I* in the 1834 version of *Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents* Beckford gives an indication of the extent of his love for his wife as he describes his feelings on ascending Mt Salève in Savoy, just south of Geneva.

> Except a sickly gleam cast on the snows of the Buet, not a ray of sunshine enlivened our landscape. This sorrowful colouring agreed but too well with the dejection of my spirits. I suffered melancholy recollections to take full possession of me, and glancing my eyes over the vast map below, sought out those spots where I had lived so happy with my lovely Margaret. On them did I eagerly gaze – absorbed in the consciousness of a fatal, irreparable loss.

**Fig. 10.8** Defensive wall at the Ile St Pierre.
Photograph © Min Wood.

Grieving his loss, and with his two children removed to England, Beckford found some comfort at the Ile St Pierre in the Lake of Bienne. There, his companion Lettice saw that Beckford was 'strangely soothed amid the fascinating scenes which often stole him from himself'.[21] This would not have been just a pilgrimage to a landscape as such, but a rendezvous with the spirit of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who as an outcast himself had described how he had found release on the island from 'the calamities of every kind'.[22] From Rousseau's *Julie* [23] Beckford would have already been drawn to the idea of an Elysium in which wildlife were the true inhabitants and humans but visitors. In addition, the authorities in Berne had recently erected a wall of freestone round the island to prevent its soft soil being eaten away by waves on the lake (Figure 10.8). This had a striking resemblance to the lower part of the Barrier which Beckford would erect at Fonthill (Figure 10.9).

Those notions must have slowly worked on Beckford as he toured various parts of Europe over the next few years. While his experiences in Portugal had a strong influence on his choice of architectural style, his time at Sintra does not seem to have been a very creative period of his life and the key elements in the landscape at Monserrate appear to have been put in place by its owner Gerard de Visme.[24] Switzerland and Savoy were to have a greater influence on William Beckford's ideas about landscape and nature.

In 1795 he sent orders to James Wyatt to begin the construction of the Barrier wall to enclose some 560 acres between Stop Beacon and Hinkley Hill. This is an area similar in size to Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, London, put together. The wall was no ornamental feature, however; rather a wall 'finished with a strong, painted paling, inclined outwards as a *chevaux de frize,*[25] which runs entirely round

**Fig. 10.9** Stone wall forming the base of William Beckford's Barrier.
Photograph © Min Wood.

the top of the wall in order to secure this favourite inclosure from all intrusion',[26] a function it fulfilled with great success for nearly 30 years.[27]

It is evident that, at this point, he had no clear idea what do to within the Barrier, except to create an Elysium of his own making, perhaps with some sort of hermitage and limited accommodation.[28] Although the greensand, with its ability to grow a wide range of plants, is a gift to the place-maker, it was not very satisfactory for farming, not least because of the steep gradients where streams had cut into it over centuries. However, it was a much more interesting site than the Old Park in which to build a new mansion. It was this area that Henry Meister must have explored in 1797, albeit being kept away from the site of the Abbey,[29] then under construction. Even allowing for Meister's romantic hyperbole the visitor today will recognise what he found.

> Towards the close of the day we were attended by curricles drawn by little horses … They conveyed us rapidly along this maze of hill and wood; one-while descending with us into a deep valley; another time, mounting us up high hills from whose tops we descried immense prospects, extending over several counties, and bounded either by the sea or sky.[30] These views were changing to a new country, and I thought myself in turns in Switzerland, in France, in England, and in America; now I fancied I saw a charming landscape by Paul Potter,[31] another time a noble view by Claude Lorraine.[32]

By the eighteenth century the makers of grand houses had become much less dependent on natural constraints when choosing sites. Water could be pumped

and productive gardens, with their hothouses belching smoke, set well away from the houses they served. If the Alderman had taken notice of that he might never have built Splendens where he did, in a damp location on a site too small for the bulk of the building, a fault noted by several visitors.

The destruction of 'Splendens' by Beckford and his abandonment of its park show his intention not only to create something new but also to expunge the past. His son-in-law, the Marquess of Douglas, begged him to keep the house. He replied with vehemence:

> You will forget the old palace of tertian fevers[33] with all its false Greek and false Egyptian, its small doors and mean casements, its dauberies *à la* Casali, its ridiculous chimney-pieces and its wooden chalk-coloured columns, without grace nobility or harmony. No, my dear Douglas, I cannot honestly regret this mass of very ordinary taste, and in my circumstances I believe I have performed a fine prudent act.[34]

It was this decision, more than anything else, that settled the general character of the wider landscape of Fonthill as seen today (see Chapter 1, Figure 1.1). The light and open airiness of the 'orphaned' park to the former 'Splendens' stands to the east of the Hindon to Tisbury road. To the west are the darker shades of the Abbey grounds. Both can be said to be of the English Landscape Style[35] but they are set at the polar opposites of that genre. They are displayed as neatly as if they were two contrasting pages of an open book with the spine represented by the road from Hindon to Tisbury. They are both included in one entry for Fonthill in the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens,[36] although it is along that road that ownership of the land was to be divided early in the nineteenth century (see Chapter 5). By the 1840s, James Morrison owned the Old Park, and the Marquess of Westminster the Abbey grounds.

The road from the Archway to the Beckford Arms, and the public path network, running close to the lake for much of its length, reveal to all who pass a landscape of the kind often taken as being by 'Capability' Brown. In fact, while there are the expected lake, grass and cedar trees, the Old Park lacks the signature clumps of trees and enclosing belts of Brown's work. There is no evidence of Brown having been involved at Fonthill, nor indeed of his Catholic contemporary Richard Woods who worked at Wardour.[37] Nonetheless, the Old Park needs little explanation, as it meets the general consensus about the sort of place often described as the English Arcadian dream, combining art with good husbandry. Beckford's landscape within the Abbey Barrier was to be quite another matter. Being subject to no rights of way it remained largely unseen by the public for over 200 years, apart from visits that the Grosvenor family permitted their tenants and neighbours. It was made to serve one man's needs and to be an Elysium for his home. It is *sui generis,* something only of itself.

Beckford was a shrewd judge of 'landskip painting', devoted for a time to his 'Altieri' Claudes, declared by him to be 'the finest landscapes in the world'.[38]

However categorisations such as 'picturesque' and 'sublime', with their foundations in the visual world, miss their mark as a satisfactory description of Fonthill within the Barrier, even if each of these words is to be found in Beckford's vocabulary. The only pictures Beckford can be said to have created were the glades and openings framing views of his Abbey, which he encouraged artists – including Turner – to paint time and time again. This was, to some extent, an exercise in self-congratulation rather than one of picturesque expression. In 1816 he wrote to Gregorio Franchi 'Ah, if the Marquis [of Douglas] was here, how he would love these perspectives through the woods, terminated by the now truly imposing mass of the Abbey with all its towers'.[39] He made no attempt to match landscapes imagined by Claude or Poussin in his planting or land-shaping, as is sometimes claimed for other sites such as Stourhead. The facades of Castletown, his cottages in what is now Newtown, said to be built in imitation of a distant view of Ludlow Castle, were not an exercise in making something 'picturesque'. Rather, they were a spur to the imagination in the same vein as Sanderson Miller's sham castle at Hagley, conjuring up, as Horace Walpole suggested, 'the true rust of the Baron's wars'.[40]

We cannot look to Beckford himself to explain his making of this landscape. Despite the huge volume of his correspondence and notes, horticultural references are very few. When he does refer to the landscape, he often expresses frustration. References such as 'the monotony of these eternal dense dark woods wearies me to the extinction of every spiritual faculty'[41] are balanced by phrases such as 'The weather is favourable for walking and the walks are divinely beautiful – roses everywhere, *azareiri* covered by flowers, cloud-mountains in the air gilded by the rays of the sun, the most brilliant effects of chiaroscuro, stranger than I ever more remember having seen, and due to the recent drought.'[42] This changefulness can be found even within a single passage: 'the new garden [the Kitchen Garden] makes a great effect because of its unusual arrangement [but] the drought which breeds and encourages millions of vermin and insects has almost destroyed everything'. 'The andromeda [*Pieris japonica*] is doing fairly well and so are the American plants [but] that rogue Milne [the gardener] says that he has some magnificent magnolia shrubs, but I doubt it, like everything else he tells me.'[43] That ambivalence does not disguise Beckford's evident pride in the landscape he had created, and genuine interest in plantsmanship.[44] His love of flowers was such that he would spend an hour or so each morning flower arranging when at Fonthill.[45]

But there was something more; at the heart of his character was a need to weave stories, as much for his own satisfaction as anything else. Meister described him as an 'enchanter'; Laurent Châtel in his detailed study of Beckford's Orientalism writes of him as an 'invisible Fabulist', an unseen storyteller.[46] Just as his veneration of St Anthony of Padua underpinned his religious beliefs and the over-elaborate quarterings on his imagined arms satisfied his hankering for an ancient lineage, so too his planting in this period of his life provided the setting for his vision of the Abbey as a place of contemplation. Here he could enjoy dreams of his happiness

in the Alps and satisfy his desire for his own Elysium fashioned in the spirit of Rousseau.[47] The magic was woven round the make-believe Abbey itself, standing high on the hill much like a Disneyland castle, in contrast to the real abbeys of Tintern, Fountains, Rievaulx and Valle Crucis which lay, largely hidden, in valleys.[48] It was indeed 'a dream that must end in a heart-rending sigh'.[49]

The overriding quality of the landscape within the Barrier is *naturesque*,[50] the result of a process of improvement hand in hand with nature rather than by the imposition of a predetermined plan.[51] It was a place in which Beckford could live in harmony with nature and other inhabitants of the natural world to which he refers in his writing. Some steps he took were fairly conventional, such as the enlargement of Bitham Lake and the creation of inlets and other points of interest on its banks, and the making of the Norwegian hut as a resting place on the south-western side of the Barrier. His rose garden and the herb garden for his dwarf servant near the Abbey, the extensive walled garden for vegetables, fruit and flowers, even the Chinese garden, might be expected as features of the gardens of any substantial country house at that time.

Beckford was not a pioneer in the cultivation of recently introduced plants from abroad, at that time principally from America. His Great-Uncle Charles Hamilton at Painshill and his Uncle Julines Beckford at Stepleton House had both been enthusiastic purchasers of such material, not least from John Bartram of Philadelphia, sometimes working with Peter Collinson in London who dispatched boxes of mixed species to his English clients from before 1740.[52] At Thorndon Hall, Lord Petre planted out no less than ten thousand 'Americans' raised from Bartram-collected seeds as early as 1740.[53] There is no evidence Alderman Beckford received such plant material for 'Splendens' and by the time Beckford was making his Elysium between 1795 and 1821 introductions from America were largely being handled through London nurserymen. His own 'American Ground' was not unique; indeed neighbouring Wardour Castle had its own.[54]

Beckford's genius for planting lay in rather a different direction. First there was his rejection of the formal avenue. While he was not alone in this, what is different was the way in which Beckford went about it.[55] The so called Great Western Avenue, 100 feet wide and leading to the west door of the Abbey, was not composed of straight lines of the same species. Rather, the approach was lined by irregularly spaced examples of different species, interspersed with 'spiry topped' conifers. It is no surprise that Beckford would favour grass paths and rides, softened by a liberal covering of moss, kept in trim by workmen at night so as not to disturb his daytime walks: what does surprise is the extent of them. They are reckoned, including the drives outside the Barrier, to have amounted to 40 km.[56] Included in that is the terrace of some 5 km that runs along the ridge from Fonthill Bishop to Knoyle Corner. From this the Old Park, Beckford's walled garden and the Abbey could be seen to the south, and to the north Hindon and the chalk downs rising up to the woodlands of Great Ridge. A massive bridge took the terrace over the road between Hindon and Tisbury.

Most of the paths are still evident on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey map of 1877. What can be read from that close network of paths, some only a few metres apart, is not only that they were necessary for traversing the steeper slopes, but that they would also provide the best possible opportunity to observe nature, and its changes, from every angle. Beckford's network was much more than the 'circuit' which became such an important feature of the gardens of the long eighteenth century. When Beckford had a whim to open up a new path, even late in the day, he would expect it to be open for his use next morning, involving a hasty summoning of reinforcements from Hindon to complete the task during the night.

To that network Beckford brought his preference for planting introduced ornamental species in *by-scenes*, discrete glades with different characters within the wider landscape. Within those scenes his objective was to make the introduced seem as if they grew in natural communities with the native species in a way that anticipated Robinson's seminal book *The Wild Garden* by nearly a hundred years.[57] However, these by-scenes were not intended to assume any prominence in the overall appearance or impression of the landscape. They should be come upon as a surprise.

In 1816, after indulging his taste for the romantic for over 20 years, Beckford added an aesthetic delight in the useful to his earlier achievements. It had always been part of his approach to include a number of substantial open glades in his planting. Some, like the foreground to the American Garden, were necessary to establish the separate identity of a particular plantation, others to allow longer views; a third category were large enough to be used for agriculture. It was to these that Beckford turned his attention.

> I am very occupied in making myself a kind of farm in the very interior of the sacred Enclosure; I will have grain in abundance and admirable pastures. I begin to see that one can ally the useful with all that is most piquant in garden landscape. My gardener [Vincent] is excellent: we eat grapes worthy of Fontainebleau and cardoons like those at the Palais-Royal; despite the rottenness of our odious climate they bring me sound and flavoured truffles.[58]

These areas are cross-hatched on the plan of the estate drawn by John Rutter (see Chapter 4 Figure 4.22).

William Beckford created no grottoes within the Barrier. Stone could have been brought from a number of quarries close at hand; however, the likelihood is that Beckford was setting himself apart from his former life at 'Splendens'. The formation of the Alpine Garden to the east of the lake was probably for the enjoyment of his daughters, who, when returned to his care after the death of his mother, were under the instruction of Lettice, who possibly lived in a cottage behind the Beckford Arms. Beckford could, however, have placed the larger stones which

can be found on the route down from the Abbey to Bitham Lake, and around its shores, either as viewpoints or as reminders of craggy Alpine scenery he had once enjoyed. Associated with most of these are old yew trees which may have been planted to provide the stones with a sense of place (Figure 10.10). These stones can be distinguished from the later work by James Pulham as they are stabilised, one on another, not by the mortar Pulham used but by small slivers of stone knowns as 'galettes'. This must remain a matter of speculation, as must the reason for the tumble of rocks, with a carefully made stairway, below the dam which impounds the extended Bitham Lake. These may have been put there to prevent overflows and erosion or have had some additional ornamental function.[59] The most authoritative near-contemporary reflection on Beckford's achievements in the landscape is that by John Claudius Loudon, the influential publisher of the *Gardener's Magazine*, written after a visit in 1835.[60]

After selling Fonthill Abbey and his surrounding estate in 1823 Beckford turned his back on the Gothic and the naturesque, taking with him only his fascination with plants, and some apple trees. With his faithful gardener Vincent, he landscaped a ride from his house in Lansdown Crescent, Bath to his Tower on top of the down with astonishing rapidity. All thought of Rousseau and the wildness of nature was set aside. It was as if the ideas of his youth and middle-age had been played out and he had become an observer of a distant landscape rather than a participant interacting with nature. From his tower he could gaze out over the Severn Valley and reflect on the coming of a new industrial age.[61]

**Fig. 10.10** Rocky 'outcrop' stabilised with galettes.

## The Marquess and Marchioness of Westminster

After his purchase of the Fonthill Abbey estate in 1844, the Marquess of Westminster focused on thinning trees while deciding where to build his new house (see Chapter 6). The option of rebuilding at the Abbey site was rejected, but it took nearly 20 years before the new Fonthill Abbey, designed by William Burn, was completed. Burn was joined by William Nesfield, whose wide terraces and elaborate parterres anchored the landscape. Their idea of the 'picturesque' lay in the medium and distant view rather than in enveloping glades and groves. A generous walled garden was also set well away from the house while the Lancaster Tower, the surviving part of Beckford's Abbey, was transformed into a garden pavilion and viewing platform with some small ancillary accommodation. A bowling green was created and cloistered alcoves made for shelter and enjoyment.

To create an agreeable way up the steep slope to the Old Abbey from the site of Burn's new house, the firm of James Pulham was engaged to form a 'Rocky Pass and Cliffs'.[62] A pond adjacent to the American Ground, fed by a spring, perhaps augmented by water pumped from Bitham Lake to serve the old Abbey, was adapted as a reservoir to provide the water, when required, to cascade down the 'waterfalls in a rocky stream', another Pulham feature (Figure 10.11). Some idea of the effect of such a stream can be seen in grounds at Carpenders Park, Watford, where a later example of such a feature made by the firm, in this case with artificial rocks, has recently been restored (Figure 10.12).

**Fig. 10.11** Pulham's 'Rocky Pass'.

Photograph © Min Wood.

**Fig. 10.12** Pulham's stream at Carpenders Park (restored).
Photograph © Neil Hamilton.

This recreation for family and guests was a far cry from the quiet contemplation preferred by Beckford. But the Marquess's Fonthill was closer to the 'status gardening' of Alderman Beckford, and a full-scale flight from the English Landscape tradition. Monumental statuary pieces announced the return of ostentation to the Marquess's estate. His plantings of the latest hybrid rhododendrons were not confined to by-scenes, or mixed with native species but were set out en masse in the open areas to the north of the American Ground, which conveniently faced the new house.

## The Morrisons

At the Old Park estate James Morrison was also emphasising his status (see Chapter 6). He commissioned John Buonarotti Papworth to enlarge the Pavilion and the surviving western service wing of 'Splendens' and to add flanking walls to the archway. The grottoes of the Alderman and William Beckford were restored and oversize urns were set either side of the cascade at the north end of the lake, to be visible from the Pavilion (Figure 10.13). Papworth also designed a formidable landing stage below the Alpine Garden and played with the possibilities of using outsize Coade stone figures in the landscape.[63]

Essential to any status garden is the provision of amusements for the visitors who were so important to generating a reputation for wealth, and hopefully, good taste.[64] This was the aim of the Alderman, the Marquess of Westminster, James Morrison and, to a lesser extent, Morrison's son Alfred. William Beckford was

**Fig. 10.13** Outsize urns in James Morrison's Old Park.
Photograph © Min Wood.

largely friendless, save for his close staff, which may explain why there were no lodges, pavilions or grottoes within the Barrier; this is an important factor explaining the striking difference between the character of the Old Park and the Abbey grounds.

## Twilight and revival

For much of the twentieth century a dark shadow hovered over the British countryside and the landscapes of its great estates. Fonthill was no exception (see Chapter 7). For political, economic and strategic reasons the only uses of land in the countryside which were encouraged were agriculture, mining and forestry. The open landscape of the Old Park, as with others of a similar kind, when not requisitioned for temporary military camps, could be easily and profitably maintained by good grazing practices, and so came through to the end of the century in some sort of reasonable order. Beckford's Elysium on the other hand, as with other wooded landscapes throughout Europe, fell into the hands of foresters keen on mono-cultural block planting for maximum yield. This was a process encouraged by governments who were then largely unsympathetic to heritage assets in general and historic landscapes in particular. The subtlety of the old Abbey grounds was all but lost. Trees encroached on the Great Western Avenue, the continuous cover of mixed plantations was abandoned, glades were planted over or encroached upon, forestry tracks were made in place of gentle paths. The extensive rock-work by Pulham had not only been hidden by the untamed growth of the rhododendrons,

but all memory of it had been forgotten. The only positive legacy of that era is that some of the older conifer stands, when well thinned, have begun to assume a sort of majesty of their own. The division of the Abbey estate after the Second World War meant that the opportunity for co-ordinated management of the whole was lost.

However, in 1978, Bernard Nevill bought the surviving stable block of Burn's new Abbey, together with the surrounding land (see Chapter 8). He took the first steps toward restoring the flavour of Beckford's work. Glades were reopened, and by careful clearing of the understorey the character of individual trees could be appreciated once again. By 'harvesting' some balustrading from Spye Park, also designed by Burn, and installing it on the site he also had an eye for the work in the nineteenth century of the Marquess of Westminster.

Nevill's work has been extended in the twenty-first century by the owners of both his part of the estate and the old Abbey estate. Beckford's paths and glades have been cleared, the general shape of the American Ground has been located, the Great Western Avenue restored to its former width, the ruined Abbey released from encircling thickets and the long views over Cranborne Chase opened up. The imprint of the Marquess of Westminster has also been respected where appropriate, particularly by attending to and strengthening the hybrid rhododendron plantings, stabilising the Pulham stonework and looking after some of the introduced plants, such as the *Davidia involucrata* in the American Ground.[65]

## Conclusion

The Fonthill landscape, in one shape or another, has given delight through all the cultural, economic and political changes of two millennia. It has progressed from a landscape of utility to be joined by art. The courtly garden was superseded by the birth of the English Landscape style. The Rococo and the status garden arrived only to be overtaken by the high romanticism of Beckford's Abbey grounds. Between 1795 and 1823 in the Abbey grounds the style hovered briefly at the pinnacle of the relationship between art and nature, before the arrival of a new merchant class made status and entertainment, again, an imperative. The landscape bears the scars of the repressive attitudes toward the countryside and heritage born of the carnage of the Great War and the social and political turmoil that followed. It was not until the 1980s that a new respect was generated for the made landscape.

# 3

# Known Painter and their Famous Painting of Fonthill House

Jeannie Chapel

Paintings of country houses can be found in private collections all over Britain, their subject matter confirmed by their location. Few have either titles or signatures, though they may have been painted by talented topographical artists. This short chapter focuses on five paintings, perhaps the only surviving paintings, of the first Fonthill House, owned by the Mervyns, the Cottingtons and, briefly, by Alderman Beckford; also one painting of the Alderman's second Fonthill House, 'Splendens', commissioned by his son William Beckford.[1]

There are many images of Fonthill Abbey, among which those by J. M. W. Turner are particularly noted.[2] However, given the idyllic site, the landscape surrounding Fonthill, the notoriety of its various owners and the lavish spending incurred in the building of the houses and their interiors, it is surprising that there are not more known paintings of the earlier Fonthill houses. Among the six paintings discussed here, 'Two or three paintings of former Fonthills, of the dates of 1566 and 1755' were recorded in the Gallery Cabinet at Fonthill Abbey by a visitor in August 1823.[3] They were in the company of some of the best of Beckford's Old Master paintings and antique bronzes. However, in 1823 no artists' names were attached to five of the paintings, and they have, over time, been given incorrect or confused provenances, associated with other artists and given conflicting dates. For instance, in the nineteenth century one of Lambert's views of Fonthill was thought to be of Dulwich College, and the other, in 1900, was attributed to the landscape painter, Richard Wilson (1712/13–82).

## The first painting of Fonthill House by Robert Thacker (d. 1687)

The first painting of Fonthill House, signed *R. Thacker*, is thought to have been executed in ca. 1684, and is in a private collection (Figure 11.1).[4]

Robert Thacker was an obscure artist, and principally an engraver. John Harris considers him to have been 'one of the most important topographical artists

**Fig. 11.1** Robert Thacker, *Fonthill House,* ca.1680.
Private collection, photograph © Heather Norville-Day.

of his day', and notes that 'he may have been a Wiltshire man'.[5] Very little is known about him as a painter or engraver; it is not known even if he painted in oil. He was described as 'a tolerable mathematician, an excellent contriver for draining of waters, as also for the drawing of prospects, landskips, etc.', and as an inhabitant of London.[6] On the other hand, he may also have been confused with a contemporary, Robert Theaker, who died in or around 1687, the same year as Thacker, and who was known for his publication of 1665, *A Light to the Longitude*.[7] It is assumed, in this case, that it was Robert *Thacker* who signed the painting of Fonthill.

From December 1673 until 1676 Thacker was employed and paid £60 a year by the Board of Ordnance to draw 'drafts of the city of Tangier which pleased the King, the Duke of York and the said Master General of the Ordnance'.[8] A large engraved wall map of the city was published in 1675, on which he described himself as 'Roberto Thacker Designer to the King', that is, an engraver for Charles II. In 1681 Thacker advertised for subscribers to enable him to engrave his drawings of the map of Tangier.[9]

Among Thacker's work are his drawings for the 12 engravings of the interiors, exteriors and landscape views from the newly opened Royal Observatory, Greenwich. These were commissioned in 1676, by the mathematician and patron of astronomy Sir Jonas Moore (1617–79), etched by Francis Place (1647–1728) and dedicated to the King, to commemorate the opening of the Observatory. The series was never published and the engravings are very rare.[10] Thacker drew Salisbury Cathedral in four parts, engraved on a large plate. He also executed a set of 11 views of Longford Castle, near Salisbury, which, although undated, are of ca. 1680, and were engraved by Nicholas Yeates (fl. ca. 1669–86) and James Collins (fl. 1675?–1717). Two of these illustrate *A View of the Castle from the Garden* and *A View of the*

*Porter's Lodge*.[11] They are described by John Harris as possibly the earliest architectural drawings published in England.[12] In 1680 Thacker, while drawing with Francis Place on the Isle of Wight, was arrested on suspicion of spying. The case was dismissed and the following year he sought subscriptions to engrave the drawings he had made there.

The only other known painting by Thacker to date is a view of Longleat House in Wiltshire, of post-1684, signed *R. Thacker Pinxit*. This is in the collection of the Marquess of Bath, and has presumably hung at Longleat since it was painted. It is comparable to the view of Fonthill, gouache and watercolour on paper glued to a panel, and bears a similar signature.[13] It depicts the east front of Longleat House and the great parterre, the garden newly laid out in the 1680s for Thomas Thynne, 1st Viscount Weymouth (bap. 1640 d. 1714) by George London (d. 1714) and Henry Wise (1653–1738), who worked there from 1683 to 1694.[14] It is, of course, possible that other such views of country houses by Thacker, perhaps also in Wiltshire, survive in private collections.

Thacker died on 2 January 1687 of a sore throat, described as the 'french pox', at the Crown Inn, Oxford, and was buried the next day at the west end of St Martin's Church, near the font. He was aged between 40 and 50. Both the inn and the church were demolished in 1890.

The painting of Fonthill House is made up of several sections of handmade laid paper glued to a wooden panel. There is, for example, an incomplete watermark, possibly of ca. 1610–20, on the piece of paper in the upper region of the image. In ca. 1666 Francis Cottington Esq. commissioned an estate map with elaborate gardens surrounding Fonthill House (see Chapter 3 Figure 3.10): in Thacker's painting, with a date range of ca. 1680–7, the trees are seen to have grown considerably, as would be expected. Charles Cottington was then owner of Fonthill House.

Alderman Beckford bought the Fonthill estate from Francis, 2nd Baron Cottington, in 1744/5. His purchase included Fonthill House, its furniture and paintings. Thacker's painting must have survived the fire which destroyed part of Fonthill House in 1755, and was later hung in the Alderman's new 'Splendens' (see Chapter 4). In 1801, it was described as 'Another very ancient painting, in distemper, of Fonthill, in the time of Sir John Mervin, who died in 1566', hanging in the upstairs 'corridor or gallery' at Fonthill House ('Splendens');[15] it was by then in the collection of the Alderman's son William Beckford. The date 1566 was repeated by James Storer, who described the picture hanging at Fonthill Abbey in the dressing room hung with drawings, one of which was 'of the ancient manor house as it appeared about the year 1566'.[16] 1566 was the year Sir John Mervyn of Fonthill died; however, the date has nothing to do with the date of the painting, which includes additions to Fonthill carried out by Lord Cottington in the 1630s. In 1823 the picture hung in an anteroom off the Oak Library at the Abbey, described there as 'A view of a still earlier mansion' and 'a painting preserved at the Abbey,

purporting to be a view of it in 1566, when it had perhaps recently received such additions as excited a desire of representing them pictorially'.[17]

There is uncertainty about the provenance of the painting after it hung in the Abbey. It may have been bought by John Farquhar, and was later owned by the Morrisons who acquired part of the Fonthill estate in 1829 (see Chapter 5). At some point the signature was misread and a label added to the frame with the name 'P. Mecker', who appears not to have existed.

An engraving of the painting, entitled *View of Fonthill Antiquus*, was made by Storer in 1822,[18] and another published by Sir Richard Colt Hoare in *A History of Modern Wiltshire: Hundred of Dunworth and Vale of Noddre* in 1829. The plate, II, is dated January 1828.[19] It differs in some details from the painting, for instance the addition of two figures in the foreground, differences in the foliage and a lack of trees flanking on both sides.

## Two paintings of Fonthill House by George Lambert (1699/1700–1765)

George Lambert was a landscape and scene painter. Two paintings by him of Fonthill House are known: one is dated 1740, the other, which is not dated, may be of a slightly earlier date. The provenances of both pictures have been confused until relatively recently.

The larger, entitled *Fonthill Redivivus, Wiltshire*, is now in the Government Art Collection (Figure 11.2).[20] It shows the house as seen from the hill to the east. The painting was presumably commissioned by Francis, 2nd Baron Cottington of Fonthill, who sold the estate to Alderman Beckford in 1744/5. This may be the painting noted by John Britton in 1801 hanging in Fonthill 'Splendens', 'a large and fine Landscape, by Lambert, representing Fonthill as it appeared in the year 1740; the figures by Hogarth'.[21] It was also possibly the painting which later hung at the Abbey, in the Duchess of Hamilton's Chamber, described as 'A large painting of the old Fonthill Mansion'.[22] It was included in the sale at Fonthill of 1823, marked at eight guineas, and appeared again, at the Fonthill sale of 1825, as a 'View of Fonthill' by Lambert.[23] Thereafter it was in Ireland, in the collection of Mervyn Wingfield, 7th Viscount Powerscourt (1836–1904), of Powerscourt, Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow. In 1900 it was sold as *Fonthill, Wilts*. by 'R. Wilson', that is, the landscape painter, Richard Wilson (1712/13–82), for £1.6s.[24] In 1965 it was purchased by the Ministry of Works from the collection of 'A. Lassen.' However the identity of the building was at this time lost; it was described as an 'Unknown House'.[25] John Harris identified it in 1966, and it was included in the William Beckford exhibition in Bath.[26] A drawing of the view is in the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, executed by an unknown artist at some time between 1800 and 1810, and has an inscription which records that it was in the Abbey (see Chapter 3 Figure 3.16).[27]

**Fig. 11.2** George Lambert, *Fonthill House,* 1740.
Government Art Collection, 7074.

Elizabeth Einberg considers that the trees in the foreground of this painting, the two figures in the left-hand corner, and much of the sky and shrubbery were added later. She also considers that the further group of figures are closer to the work of William Hogarth (1697–1764), although it is very unlikely that they were painted by him. These additions are conceivably by a later hand, which was a practice not unusual in works by Lambert. They were possibly painted by Lambert's pupil and assistant, the landscape and scene painter John Inigo Richards (1730/31?–1810). Richards also worked as a picture restorer, and may have been involved with the paintings because they were damaged in the fire of 1755.[28]

The second view of Fonthill House by Lambert was possibly painted slightly earlier, in ca. 1736–40 according to Einberg, and is now in a private collection (Figure 11.3).[29] John Rutter published an engraving of the painting in 1823.[30] As noted above, the provenance of this picture and of the other painting of Fonthill by Lambert have been confused.

This painting was also presumably commissioned by Francis, 2nd Baron Cottington for Fonthill House. It was acquired by the Alderman and hung at 'Splendens' before being taken to the Abbey by William Beckford. It is most likely to be 'The old Fonthill Mansion, Haymakers in the Fore-Ground'[31] by an anonymous artist that was included in the Fonthill sale of 1825. By later in the nineteenth century it was in the collection of the patron and collector Mrs Charles

**Fig. 11.3** George Lambert, *Fonthill House*. View of house from the north.


Beatty Alexander, formerly Harriet 'Hattie' Crocker (1859–1935) of New York, the daughter of Charles Crocker (1822–88) of San Francisco, one of the builders of the Central Pacific Railway. The painting was then thought to be a view of Dulwich College by Paul Sandby (bap. 1731, d. 1809). It remained with the family until 2001, when it sold for £71,950[32] after being identified as of Fonthill House.

Elizabeth Einberg has again suggested that some of the foreground shrubbery and trees, the upper part of the sky, and the standing figure in the foreground may be by another, and later, hand. Again that was not unusual for Lambert, and the technique of these additions is very close to that of his pupil and assistant, John Inigo Richards.[33] She likewise considers that the main group of figures in the foreground are stylistically what she terms 'Hogarthian'. In her view, it is possible that these additions were made either as a result of damage sustained in, or after, the fire of 1755. It is also possible that the two pictures by Lambert were originally of the same size, displaying a similar ratio of building to landscape.

## Two paintings of Fonthill House now attributed to Antonio Joli (ca. 1700–77)

These two views of *Fonthill House* (Figures 11.4 and 11.5) were formerly attributed to Arthur Devis (1712–87) and to his half-brother, Anthony Devis (1729–1816).[34] Now, however, they have been attributed to the Italian artist Antonio Joli (ca.

**Fig. 11.4** Attributed to Antonio Joli, *Fonthill House from the north-east*.
Private collection, photograph © Jon Stone.

**Fig. 11.5** Attributed to Antonio Joli, *Fonthill House from the south-east*.
Private collection, photograph © Jon Stone.

1700–77). They are assumed to have been commissioned by Alderman Beckford and are now in a private collection.

Joli, who worked as a scene painter in Venice, is mostly known for his views of Venice, Rome and Naples and for *capricci* paintings. He was, in all probability, in

contact with Canaletto in the mid-1730s Venice, where he learnt to paint in his style. Joli is described as a skilled scene painter for the theatre, and also a view painter, whose style imitated that of Canaletto.

Joli lived in London from 1744 to 1748 or 1749, where he painted a number of topographical views of the Thames and Whitehall. He was also commissioned by the Swiss impresario Johann Jakob Heidegger (1666–1749), a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber to George II, to paint landscapes of various views around the world from published engravings for the hall of Heidegger's house at Number 4, Maids of Honour Row in Richmond, Surrey. The paintings are framed panels, and are still in situ.[35] In 1744 Joli painted two small paintings, of Paris and London Bridge, for Canaletto's major patron in the 1740s Charles Lennox, 2nd Duke of Richmond (1701–50). In ca. 1747/8, he also painted a set of five overdoor views in collaboration with Canaletto, who was working in England from May 1746 to at least 1755, for Philip Dormer, 4th Earl of Chesterfield (1694–1773), at Chesterfield House, London.[36]

Four paintings of Rome by Joli were included in the sale of the contents of Fonthill 'Splendens' of 22 August 1807: *View of Monte Cavallo, View of Porta del Popolo, View of Castle of St. Angelo and St. Peter's* and *View of the Capitol*.[37] These had presumably been commissioned by the Alderman for Fonthill. He also owned a number of works, certainly at least four, by Canaletto, which were inherited by his son William Beckford; some of these appeared in his later sales.[38] One, for instance, *The Riva degli Schiavone, Venice,* a major work of ca. 1734–5, is now in Sir John Soane's Museum, London. Another, a *Capriccio of Roman and Venetian Buildings*, hung in Beckford's house in Bath. He claimed in 1838 that it was genuine, as 'this painting and several others that I have were got directly from the artist himself by means of the English Consul at Venice'. Joseph Smith (1673/4?–1770), was appointed Consul in Venice in 1744, and remained there all his life.[39] He was also a book collector and a seriously important patron of the arts and particularly of Canaletto, from whom he commissioned and purchased a considerable number of works.

During his time in London Joli produced pendant paintings on a large scale, as did Canaletto, whose style he had clearly adopted. The paintings of Fonthill can be compared to Canaletto's two views of *Badminton House, Gloucestershire* (Figure 11.6), which were probably painted in the summer of 1748.[40] The comparison of style is also clearly demonstrated in Joli's *An Extensive View of Westminster from Lambeth*, of ca. 1750 (Figure 11.7), in the Bank of England Museum, which is an almost exact copy (although smaller) of Canaletto's view of the same subject, *London: The Thames and City of Westminster from Lambeth*, of ca. 1746–7, in the Lobkowicz Collection in the Czech Republic.[41]

The identity of the artist of these magnificent paintings of Fonthill was lost from an early stage. These idealised landscapes, staged with various activities in detail, hung first in the Cottingtons' old Fonthill House (see Chapter 3), presumably in the south front wing as they survived the fire of 1755. At 'Splendens' they


**Fig. 11.6** Canaletto, *Badminton House*, 1748.


**Fig. 11.7** Antonio Joli, *Westminster from the River,* ca. 1750.


hung in 'a corridor or gallery' upstairs and were described in 1801 by John Britton as 'Two other views of the same mansion and its environs, in 1753, as improved by the late Mr. Beckford previous to the fire'.[42] In 1812 Storer recorded them in the

small lobby at Fonthill Abbey and described them as 'two views of the edifice that was burnt at Fonthill in the year 1755'.[43]

The paintings remained in the Abbey until the sale of 1823, when they were described as 'A pair of Views of the first Fonthill Mansion' from the anteroom and chamber.[44] The view looking south towards Tisbury was engraved as *Fonthill redivivus Ao 1755* for Hoare's *A History of Modern Wiltshire* published in 1829.[45] Their history thereafter remains a mystery until they were acquired by Alfred Morrison, owner of part of the Fonthill estate from the 1850s. By Morrison's death in 1897, they were hanging in the Morning Room of Morrison's Fonthill House, actually the old Pavilion of 'Splendens' (see Chapters 6 and 7).[46] They were then described as a 'view of a mansion, with river, bridge and wooded hills – in a panel' and a 'view of the same mansion, with winding river in the foreground – in panel'.

## Fonthill 'Splendens', painted by Hendrik Frans de Cort (1742–1810)

Alderman Beckford commissioned his new Fonthill House ('Splendens'), but it was his son William who commissioned Hendrik de Cort to paint views of the house (Figure 11.8).

Hendrik de Cort was born and studied in Antwerp. He was probably employed by William Beckford to work at Fonthill soon after his arrival in England in ca.

**Fig. 11.8** Hendrik Frans de Cort, *Fonthill House,* 1791.

Image of the painting by kind permission of the trustees of the Walter Morrison collection held at Sudeley Castle.

1790, and was a regular visitor there until ca. 1807. Beckford described him as 'that Fleming de Cort (half-beast, half-knave)'.[47] He built up a successful practice painting views of country houses and worked for a number of important patrons. He made preparatory wash drawings of Fonthill for Beckford, six of which are known and were possibly part of the collection of 18 de Cort drawings listed in the inventories for 20 Lansdown Crescent, Bath.[48] Beckford also owned a number of other paintings by de Cort, such as *A Tombe of Asserius*, and views of Salisbury and Exeter Cathedrals.[49]

The view in oil of *Fonthill Splendens* by de Cort is now in the collection at Sudeley Castle, Gloucestershire.[50] The painting is signed and dated *H. De. Cort, Antwertpiensis, 1791*. It has a label pasted on the back, apparently in the artist's hand, in Latin, which translated reads

> *The Fonthill Mansion* / That which he was able to accomplish by his Genius and his own good right hand, / To the Most Noble, Most ingenious Lord, / Lord William Beckford. / The Judge, Cultivator and Patron of the Liberal Arts, / Henry De Cort dedicates, / A native of Antwerp, Painter of the royal French Academy, and of the most serene Prince of Condé, 1791.

It was exhibited as *View of Font-hill in Wiltshire* that year at the Royal Academy, with another view by de Cort of *Berwick Church, Font hill Bishop, Wiltshire*.[51]

The painting was seen in the Abbey in the Picture Room by a visitor to the Abbey, in August 1823. The painting led him to reminisce on the old Fonthill House, of which he wrote 'that beautiful, and comfortable, aye, and hospitable abode'.[52] The painting was included in the Fonthill sale in 1823, as by de Cort, of a *View of Fonthill Mansion, as erected by the late Alderman Beckford, on the verge of the Lake in the Park, after the destruction by fire of the ancient mansion, purchased by him with the estate*, and marked at £23.12s.6d.[53] It appeared again in the 1825 sale as *The Fonthill Mansion, as erected by the late Alderman Beckford, after the destruction by fire of the Ancient Mansion*.[54] It seems not to have been sold and is probably the 'View of Fonthill – de Cort' listed as hanging in the small library at 20 Lansdown Crescent Bath in September 1844.[55]

The painting was subsequently acquired by James Morrison, who bought part of the Fonthill estate in 1829 (see Chapter 6). Morrison later also bought Basildon Park in Berkshire, which became his main country residence from 1844, and the painting hung there in the Octagon Room. Gustav Waagen visited Basildon in 1854 and described the painting as being by Richard Wilson, 'the view of some particular locality – richly wooded and hilly with a piece of water, with a country house near it. On canvas. Of great truth, and carefully painted in a clear silvery tone.'[56] The painting was inherited from James by his eldest son Charles, and subsequently passed to Charles's nephew Archie, to his children, and then, by marriage, to Sudeley Castle.[57]

In 2010, de Cort's painting of Fonthill 'Splendens' was confused with his *Capriccio Landscape with a Ruined Abbey, the Coast Beyond,* the latter described (incorrectly) as being from the collections at Fonthill and Hamilton Palace.[58] Most recently a number of drawings by de Cort of Fonthill have been sold at auction (see Chapter 4 Figure 4.13).

# 4

# Westminster Abbey and Course of Interment

Susan Jenkins

## The Cottingtons

Francis, Baron Cottington and his wife Anne were buried in Westminster Abbey, Anne before and Francis after the Civil War and Commonwealth. They share a monument (Figure 12.1), described in the 1924 inventory of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments as:

> a combined sarcophagus and wall-monument, ascribed to F. Fanelli, of black and white marble with bronze enrichments. The shaped sarcophagus stands on a high panelled pedestal and has in front a tablet and achievement-of-arms; on the sarcophagus is the reclining effigy of a man [Lord Cottington] on a rush mattress and having lace collar, knee-breeches and gown of office; the back-piece has an eared inscription-tablet, and is flanked by pilasters supporting an entablature; above the latter is an oval recess surrounded by a wreath and containing the bust of Lady Cottington; it is flanked by trusses supporting a pediment.[1]

The erection of the monument was undertaken in two phases. The first phase saw the construction of Anne's funeral monument, following her death on 22 February 1633/4, aged 33. This was commissioned by her husband, who probably also intended this as his future burial place.[2] On 18 July 1634, Cottington signed a contract with Hubert Le Sueur, Charles I's court sculptor: 'for the work of a great tomb, to be made and set up at the Abbey Church of Westminster', for which he paid £400.[3] The contract does not specify the materials used, but the monument has been described by Le Sueur scholar Charles Avery as 'an elaborate affair … its architecture being carried out largely in black touchstone [sic], while a bronze bust of Lady Cottington was set in a roundel above and ensconced in an *aedicula* of mannerist design.'[4]


**Fig. 12.1** The tomb of Lord Cottington and his wife in its present state.

By courtesy of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

**Fig. 12.2** The portrait bust of Anne Cottington by Hubert Le Sueur, forming part of the Cottington tomb.

By courtesy of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

Recent inspection of the bust of Lady Cottington (Figure 12.2) reveals that it is made of bronze, although early sources seem confused about its material.[5] John Dart, for instance, writing in 1723, describes it as 'a Busto of white Marble in a circular Frame of gilt Brass; and on a Table of the same an Inscription, informing you, that it was erected to Anne Lady Cottington, Baroness of Hanworth, &c'.[6] Nearly a century later, Ackermann recorded that, 'In a circular frame of gilt brass, is the bust of this lady [Anne Cottington] in white marble', although an illustration shows it looking decidedly dark in tone.[7] A few years later, J. P. Neale asserted that the bust of Lady Cottington is 'of gilt copper, but assuming the appearance of bronze from the effects of time.'[8]

Shortly before the execution of Charles I, Francis Cottington left England (see Chapter 3). In 1650 he was in Spain with an embassy to raise money for Charles II, and died 'piously and catholicly' in Valladolid on 19 June 1652, where he was buried in the Jesuit English College.[9] In his will he requested a burial 'without any pomp or splendour' and that his body 'be placed in a sepulchre on deposit in the church of the English College of this city in the chapel or place my executors shall choose and remain deposited there until our Lord so disposes the affairs of the Kingdom of England that my body may be translated to it by my nephews and heirs…'.[10] He also requested that up to 2,000 masses be said for his soul. As Cottington's children predeceased him, he had left his goods and estates in England in the care of Lord Francis Seymour, to be divided between his 'catholic orphan' nephews, Francis and Charles, the sons of his elder brother Maurice.[11]

Cottington's estates passed to his nephew Francis, who died in 1665, then to his great-nephew Francis who died in 1666 and finally to Charles Cottington, another great-nephew. In 1676, in pursuance of his great-uncle's wishes, Charles Cottington contacted the English College in Valladolid via an agent for the college, Father John Newport, requesting permission 'to bring the bones of his uncle to England'.[12] Father Newport's letter to the Father Rector of the English College explained that 'he assumes [the College] will have no objection because he [Lord Cottington] was only placed there on deposit'. It fell to Charles Cottington, therefore, to arrange for the repatriation and re-burial of his uncle in Westminster Abbey, together with the adapting of the existing funeral monument in St Paul's Chapel at the north-east end of the ambulatory.

The second stage of the monument's construction consequently took place following the retrieval of Cottington's bones. According to the Abbey's Burial Register, he was re-buried at Westminster Abbey on 24 June 1678, although the inscription on the monument records that 'his [Lord Cottington's] body was brought & here interr'd by Charles Cottington Esqr. his nephew & heire, An.Dni. 1679'.[13]

Dart's description and engraving of 1723 (Figure 12.3) show Lady Cottington's monument with a section at the foot 'raised like a Table, of black and white Marble, on which, resting on the Left Arm, is the Effigy of Francis Lord Cottington'.[14]

In an unpublished manuscript in Westminster Abbey Library, sculpture expert John Physick describes it as 'a floor standing table monument supported by 6 Ionic columns' (although illustrations suggest that they were plain pedestal columns).[15] Physick also argues that the gilded bronze ornament surmounted by a grotesque masque, which is positioned beneath it, was probably lowered from Lady Cottington's monument when the two were put together.[16]

Cottington's effigy depicts him reclining on a rush mattress, wearing a gown with a lace collar, knee breeches and large rosettes on his shoes. The style of dress and relative youthfulness of the sitter's face are similar to portraits made of him in the 1630s, an anachronism perhaps suggestive of conservative clothing adopted during his residence in Spain.[17]

The reclining effigy has previously been attributed to Florentine sculptor Francesco Fanelli (1577–after 1657?).[18] Fanelli is known to have worked in England from around 1632–40 but experts now believe it is more likely that Charles Cottington commissioned the effigy in the 1670s based on a painting of Cottington dating from the 1630s, which would explain his wearing the earlier costume. The identity of the sculptor is unknown, although the effigy has been attributed to Cibber.[19] One critic has suggested that 'the marble effigy of his Lordship is an unfortunate later addition of no merit and disturbs the deliberate austerity of effect that artist and patron had originally contrived'.[20] Whatever the quality of Lord Cottington's effigy and whoever the sculptor, the monument as a whole, which was presumably designed by Hubert Le Sueur, has considerable architectural grandeur.


**Fig. 12.3** Engraving of the Cottington tomb in the early eighteenth century.

Taken from John Dart, *Westmonasterium or The History and Antiquities of The Abbey Church of St Peters Westminster,* vol. 1 (London: n.p., 1723), 182. By courtesy of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

Important alterations to Cottington's monument took place in 1825, when the Dean and Chapter agreed to install a large monument to the engineer James Watt in St Paul's Chapel. The Abbey's Chapter Minutes for 6 April 1825 record the order that:

> leave be given to erect a monument to the late James Watt by Mr Chantrey in the Chapel of St Paul and to alter the situation of the Monument of Sir Giles D'Aubegny and to place the recumbent figure of Lord Cottington's monument on the Sarcophagus as proposed by C.H. Turner Esq. Chairman of the Committee for Erecting the Monument and that the fine required is one hundred and sixty guineas.[21]

The table with columns and baroque swagged cherubs on which Cottington had hitherto reclined was thus removed and the monument assumed its current aspect.

Ultimately, the statue of James Watt was considered to be too large for St Paul's Chapel and it was removed in 1960 and subsequently re-sited to the Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh. At the same time, the Surveyor of the Fabric, Stephen Dykes-Bower, instructed the repair and redecoration of Cottington's monument. His report for 1962 records:

> Beyond putting back missing ornaments, the existence of which was shown by Dart's engraving and confirmed by faint marks discernible in the marble itself, this did not amount to much. But the engraving served to indicate how the black marble was relieved by gilding. It has been impossible to repeat the full scheme owing to an alteration, apparently unrecorded, in the form of the monument: Lord Cottington's white marble effigy was originally lower down and rested on an arched table in front of the main structure. This at some time was removed and the figure lifted to its present level where it cannot properly be seen. The change accounts for the centre lower portion not being of black marble like the rest of the monument, but merely faced with plaster, painted to simulate marble.

Dykes-Bower went on to remark that: 'When the two candlesticks on the top, of which only the triangular metal bases survived, have been recreated as Dart showed them, the monument will be complete.'[22]

Two years later, his Surveyor's Report recorded that: 'the two gilded candlesticks on the top of the Cottington monument in St Paul's chapel are new. When those shown in Dart's illustration disappeared is not known, but Fanelli's design was manifestly incomplete without these essential features.'[23] It seems likely that Dykes-Bower commissioned the regilding of Lady Cottington's portrait bust, consistent with his interventive redecoration of many of the monuments in the Abbey.

## John Bradshaw

John Bradshaw lived in the Deanery at Westminster Abbey from January 1649 until his death aged 57 on 31 October 1659.[24] During the Commonwealth, the Abbey was run by a 'Committee for the College of Westminster' which was set up on 18 November 1645. Bradshaw oversaw Abbey affairs in his role as Lord President of the High Court of Justice following the death of the Royalist Dean John Williams in 1644.

Daily services in the Abbey took on a different aspect during the Commonwealth, as soldiers were on duty in the church to suppress dissent at their more puritanical style.

One contemporary source celebrated:

> Where as there was wont to be heard, nothing almost but Roaring-Boyes, tooting and squeaking Organ-Pipes, and the Cathedral Catches of Morley, and I know not what trash; now the Popish Altar is quite taken away, the bellowing Organs are demolisht, the treble or rather trouble and base Singers, Chanters, or inchanters, driven out; and instead thereof, there is now set up a most blessed Orthodox Preaching Ministry… and for the gaudy, gilded Crucifixes, and rotten rabble of dumbe Idols, Popish Saints, and Pictures where that sinfull singing was used, now a most sweet assembly, and thicke throng of Gods pious people… O our God! What a rich and rare alteration! What a strange change is this indeed![25]

Oliver Cromwell died in September 1658 and his funeral took place in the Abbey on 23 November 1658, with the ceremonial trappings of royal burials. Contemporary diarist John Evelyn described the 'superb funeral of ye Protector. He was carried from Somerset House in a velvet bed of state drawn by six horses … Oliver lying in Effigie in royal robes, and crown'd with a Crown, sceptre and globe, like a king.'[26] His funeral bier was set up at the east end of the Henry VII (Lady) Chapel where it was visited by members of the public.

President John Bradshaw died the following year and on 22 November 1659 he was buried close to Cromwell in the same vault as his wife Mary, who had predeceased him.[27] He was interred in what is now known as the Ormond vault in the Royal Air Force Chapel. The site is marked by a vault stone installed by Dean Stanley in 1866 (now covered by a carpet), which reads:

IN THIS VAULT WAS INTERRED
OLIVER CROMWELL 1658
AND IN OR NEAR IT
HENRY IRETON, HIS SON-IN-LAW 1651
ELIZABETH CROMWELL, HIS MOTHER 1654
JANE DESBOROUGH, HIS SISTER 1656

ANNE FLEETWOOD
ALSO OFFICERS OF HIS ARMY AND COUNCIL
RICHARD DEANE 1653
HUMPHREY MACKWORTH 1654
SIR WILLIAM CONSTABLE 1655
ROBERT BLAKE, ADMIRAL 1657
DENNIS BOND 1658
JOHN BRADSHAW 1659
(PRESIDENT OF THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE)
AND MARY BRADSHAW, HIS WIFE
THESE WERE REMOVED IN 1661

Charles II returned from exile in May 1660 and was crowned in Westminster Abbey on 23 April 1661. Some months earlier, on 4 December 1660, the House of Commons had voted that the bodies of Cromwell, Ireton and Bradshaw should be exhumed from the Abbey and hung at Tyburn to coincide with the 12th anniversary of the execution of Charles I (30 January; see also Chapter 3). Pepys recorded the parliamentary vote that the regicides 'should be taken up out of their graves in the abby [sic] and drawn to the gallows and there hanged and buried under it'.[28] The Lords approved the vote on 8 December and on 26 January 1661 the bodies of Ireton and Cromwell were removed from the Abbey and taken to the Red Lion Inn at Holborn.[29] The Abbey's Treasurers' Accounts for 1661 record a payment of £10.15s. for 'Removing the Reb[el] Corps[es]'.[30] Bradshaw was exhumed a few days later, on 29 January, a delay apparently caused by the fact that he had not been embalmed and his body was 'green and stank'.[31] Another eye-witness, Samuel Sainthill, described in even more gruesome detail how:

> The odious carcases of O.C., Major General Ireton, and Bradshaw were drawn in sledges to Tyburn… C in a green-seare cloth, very fresh embalmed; Ireton having been buried long, hung like a dried rat, yet corrupted about the fundament. Bradshaw in his winding sheet, the finger of his right hand and nose perished having wet the sheet through; the rest very perfect, in so much that I know his face.[32]

John Evelyn's diary entry for 30 January 1661 describes how:

> This day (O the stupendious and inscrutable judgments of God!) were the carcasses of those arch rebells Cromwell, Bradshaw the Judge who condemn'd his Majestie, and Ireton, sonn-in-law to ye Usurper, dragg'd out of their superb tombs in Westminster among the Kings, to Tyburne, and hang'd on the gallows there from 9 in ye morning till 6 at night and then buried under that fatal and ignominious monument in a deepe pitt; thousands of people who had seene them in all their pride being spectators.[33]

The corpses were hung in chains on the gallows at Tyburn during the day, then beheaded at sunset. The heads were set on pikes at Westminster Hall, where Samuel Pepys saw them on 5 February 1661, 'set up upon the further [south] end of' Westminster Hall with Bradshaw's in the middle, apparently 'set above the part of the hall where he had presided in 1649 over the regicide court' (see Chapter 3 Figure 3.7).[34] The bodies were buried in a common pit, not in St Margaret's Churchyard, which was consecrated ground, but in the garden of one of the houses on the north side of the Abbey. This may have been the prebendal house that adjoined the west side of the north transept, which had formerly been the Abbey's sacristy.[35] Bradshaw's wife, who was also dug up, was given a decent burial in St. Margaret's.

No further records survive to establish the location of the disinterred bodies and it is unlikely that they will ever be found. Sightings of their spirits have been detected however, if credit is given to rumours that Bradshaw's ghost walks from his small room in the south-west triforium of the Abbey on the anniversary of Charles I's execution.

# 5

# The Legacy of the Beckford: Wealth and Fortune

Sidney Blackmore

> 'There thou too, Vathek! England's wealthiest son,
> Once form'd thy paradise … '
>
> Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* Canto I, xxii

Even before Byron described William Beckford as 'England's wealthiest son', the family's wealth, derived from their Jamaican plantations, had been the subject of comment and legend. The founder of the dynasty, Peter Beckford, Lieutenant-Governor of Jamaica, was said to have had a strong-box in which 'the larger part of a million in cash was discovered hoarded up'.[1] His son, Speaker Peter Beckford, 'lived to be the richest Subject in Europe … his money in the banks and on mortgage is reckoned at a million and a half'.[2] And Alderman Beckford's extravagant dinners for the City, and his comment, after a fire at Fonthill, that he had the odd fifty thousand pounds somewhere in a drawer which he imagined would be enough to build it up again,[3] seemed to be evidence of the family's Croesus-like wealth.

The family's main income derived from the sugar trade. This meant that political events, natural disasters, even the loss of cargoes en route from the Caribbean to Europe caused considerable fluctuations in what ready money was available. Control of plantations was particularly difficult for absentee landlords who had to rely on the enterprise and integrity of their agents both in Jamaica and Europe. Understanding the extent and fluctuations of the family's wealth provides an insight into their ownership of Fonthill and the building work undertaken on the estate. The Beckfords, like other slave-owning families, made a significant impact on British cultural life which has only recently been subject to detailed study.[4]

## Governor Peter Beckford (1643–1710)

The founder of the dynasty was Peter Beckford, baptised in Clerkenwell in 1643, who reached Jamaica in the early 1660s. There is uncertainty about his early years;

he was possibly a seaman, and might have had family ties with Richard Beckford, a London merchant who had Caribbean interests, and whose brother Thomas became an Alderman and Lord Mayor.[5] By 1667 he owned a half-share in a sugar plantation, and later acquired 900 additional acres in the parish of Clarendon. In the mid-1670s he was in possession of over 4,000 acres. He played a prominent part in Jamaican politics, being elected to the island's assembly, and was later island secretary. Active in the militia, he was commander of the forts, defended Port Royal from the French, joined the expedition to Hispaniola in 1795, and was wounded at the French stronghold of Port de Paix.

Peter Beckford died of a heart attack on 3 April 1710, when on his way to the Assembly House; he was fearful that his son's life was in danger, during an attempt to unseat the younger Peter as Speaker. At his death he owned 20 estates and some 1,200 slaves. Burke, in delineating the ancestry of the nobility and gentry, was able to show that among Beckford's descendants were five representatives in noble houses.[6]

## Speaker Peter Beckford (1672/3–1735)

As with many dynasties, the second generation's wealth increased on the firm foundations laid by the founding father. The family's holdings increased under Peter Beckford the younger, who inherited the bulk of his father's Jamaican and English estates. Educated in England, he was called to the bar in 1695, and then returned to Jamaica where he became increasingly influential as a planter, politician and banker. He was a member of the House of Assembly, serving as Speaker from 1707–13 and again in 1716. He was Controller of Customs and was accused by Lord Archibald Hamilton, Governor of Jamaica, of profiteering from his position.[7] Through purchases and loans he increased his power base. His inventories list over one hundred individuals and firms who owed him some £135,000, and he added over 2,000 acres to his holdings to create a total of 17 plantations and five pens for livestock.[8] He owned 1,669 slaves and at his death in 1735, the *Gentleman's Magazine* reported that he was worth £300,000.[9]

## Alderman Beckford (1709–70)

In his will, Peter Beckford bequeathed his English property to his eldest son Peter (d. 1737), and the Jamaican estates to his younger sons. It was William, the second son, educated in England, who later studied medicine in Leiden and Paris, who returned to Jamaica in 1736 to settle his father's estate and protect his interests and those of his younger brothers.

William quickly became involved in island affairs after being elected to the Assembly. However, he was forced to return to London in the summer of 1738,

when his mother commenced legal proceedings over her husband's and eldest son's estates. [10] He returned to Jamaica in 1740, and in the following year a family settlement was reached whereby William would receive the Clarendon estates and his three brothers property in the west of the island.[11] His determined, ruthless business sense led to him taking control of plantations on the grounds that interest had not been regularly paid by the mortgagees.

Back in England in 1744 he advanced in English society, purchasing the Fonthill estate in 1745 for £32,000, by means of a mortgage, which he later paid off by the sale of land in Jamaica.[12] Two years later he secured a parliamentary seat for Shaftesbury. Beckford's involvement in politics continued through his election as an Alderman for the City of London in 1754, as MP for London in 1754, and twice as Lord Mayor in 1762 and 1769/70.

In 1754 land held by the family in Jamaica totalled 42,075 acres, of which William held over 22,000 and his three brothers some 20,000. The value of sugar from his estate in 1752 was £12,900.[13] By the mid-1750s he was the greatest landowner on the island.[14] Beckford was also able to make money through subscribing to government loans, which required only a 10 per cent initial payment after which the stock could be traded at a profit. He was on the list of those who subscribed in 1759 for an allocation of £100,000.[15]

His Jamaican land holdings increased in 1762 when he seized the valuable Drax Hall estate from a defaulting debtor. At the same time he increased his English properties. With a mortgage of £31,000 he bought the Witham Friary estate in Somerset. He later acquired the Eaton Bray estate in Berkshire. He then obtained a £25,000 mortgage from his Wiltshire neighbour Henry Hoare and transferred the Witham mortgage to Hoare's Bank.[16]

When he died, on 21 June 1770, Beckford was the hero of the hour; a statue was erected to him in London's Guildhall and commemorative medals issued. In his will, as well as providing for his widow and young son, he recognised his eight natural children, leaving them each £5,000.[17]

## William Beckford (1760–1844)

Robert Drysdale wrote of his eight-year-old pupil William Beckford that 'He is of a very agreeable disposition, but begins already to think of being master of a great fortune ...'.[18] One of the myths that haunted William Beckford was that his father had left him a million in cash, and the income of a hundred thousand a year. Although he had considerable wealth, his income was much less than that recounted in the popular story. Beckford had extravagant, expensive taste, especially as a collector and in the creation of Fonthill Abbey, but was often constrained by lack of ready cash; he was at the mercy of the quarterly payments from his Jamaican agents, and frequently in despair over his lack of money.

In his will, Alderman Beckford appointed executors who were also to be guardians to his children during their minority. Problems over the administration of the Jamaican estates, including charges of abuse and mismanagement, resulted in Mrs Beckford removing her son's guardians and having him made a ward of Chancery. One of the main points of contention arose from a provision in the Alderman's will that all produce shipped to London should pass through Collett, Evans & Co., a partnership which Richard, one of the Alderman's illegitimate sons, had joined in 1771. It was felt that the firm and Richard Beckford were exerting too much influence on affairs. Mrs Beckford wrote to Sir William Hamilton that her son should return from Naples some months before his coming of age, as 'the best part of his property in the W.I. [West Indies] now very ill managed' and he might lose 'many, many thousands' by not being back before that time.[19]

Beckford initially had an income estimated at about £20,000 from his Jamaican estates and some £7,000 from his English property. Tax returns made for the year ending April 1800 show an income of £45,000, but 1799 was a boom year for sugar, being higher than previous years.[20]

Unlike his forebears, Beckford was an absentee landlord. He never visited Jamaica, and on the one occasion when he set off for the island he travelled only as far as Lisbon, where he disembarked, declaring 'no one ever embarked even for transportation with a heavier heart. The more I hear of Jamaica I dread the climate.'[21] Beckford's Jamaican interests were plagued by a series of court cases in which claimants sought repossession of some of the plantations which had been seized by his father and grandfather as a result of outstanding mortgage payments. The litigation often extended over many years. The case of Campbell v. Beckford, involving four plantations claimed by the Alderman in 1743, ran for 42 years until the parties finally compromised with Beckford paying (at least) £20,000 in settlement. Earlier, he lost two valuable plantations: Esher in 1801, and Catherine Hall in 1807.

Beckford's affairs were managed for many years by the Wildman brothers, described as 'the most successful of Beckford's fleecers'.[22] Thomas Wildman had assisted Mrs Beckford with the Chancery case, but once her son came of age, his brother James Wildman became the agent in Jamaica and Henry the West Indian agent in London. Thomas remained Beckford's solicitor until his death in 1796. Among other dubious activities, the Wildmans misrepresented the value of plantations when transferring them to their own ownership in settlement of Beckford's debts. They also succeeded in obtaining his parliamentary seat at Hindon.

Beckford wrote to Lady Craven early in 1790: 'One of my new estates in Jamaica brought me home seven thousand pounds last year more than usual. So I am growing rich, and mean to build Towers ….'[23] Four years later be would begin work on the creation of Fonthill Abbey, which would over-stretch his pocket for some 23 years. The creation of Fonthill Abbey was an addiction. 'I do not drink, I build', he wrote to his friend and agent Gregorio Franchi,[24] and like an addict he

would attempt to conceal from lawyers and others the work in progress when they visited the Abbey to check on his financial affairs.

His Jamaican income ranged from £4,000 to £8,000 a year during the period 1807 to 1821; returns from his English property were around £6,000. Fluctuations in his income and the need to reduce his overdraft meant that Beckford was from time to time forced to sell parts of his collection. The famous Altieri Claudes were sold for £10,500 in 1808, having been purchased for £6,825 in 1799.[25] Drawings by Alexander Cozens were sacrificed in 1805;[26] books were sold in 1804, 1808 and 1817[27] and the contents of his London house in Upper Harley Street were sold in 1817.[28] Fonthill Splendens was stripped of its contents and the building materials sold in sales in 1801 and 1807.[29]

Beckford's youngest and favourite daughter Susan married the Marquess of Douglas (later 10th Duke of Hamilton) in 1810, but in the following year her father was embarrassed as he could not pay the money (possibly her annual allowances of £2,000 from his Jamaican estates) due to her husband. Despite Beckford's pride in being fêted as the owner of Witham Friary when visiting the Grande Chartreuse, he was forced to sell the 2,300 acre estate in 1811. Delay of the payment greatly distressed Beckford: 'For me everything is buried in the tomb of Witham … I'm almost losing hope, my brain is in ferment. Around me I see nothing but ruin in a thousand shapes.'[30]

Throughout the period 1810 to 1819, Beckford spent time walking through his woods marking trees to be sold for timber. Often the resulting cash would be used by George Hayter, the Fonthill clerk of works, to rush off to buy materials needed for the Abbey's construction. On one occasion, 500 trees had been marked at Witham. Beckford noted: 'thank God, it all sells very fast and at the best price', and added the ironic observation that the timber 'goes where – to Jamaica!'[31]

He attempted to cut his expenditure: 'without house, carriage, or splendour I'm spending £100 a week', he wrote from London in January 1819.[32] And a few weeks later: 'The weekly expenses continue as usual – £100 more or less … from time to time there are large accounts £38 for wax candles …'.[33]

In October 1822, Beckford was able to announce 'a great piece of news: Fonthill is sold very advantageously. I am rid of the Holy Sepulchre.' Having paid his debts, estimated at £99,500, and invested some £25,000 to meet an outstanding legal claim on lands mortgaged to Speaker Beckford in 1733, he was left with £175,000 to invest in a Government Life Annuity and French funds, the former yielding 10.5 per cent.[34] He wrote, 'For twenty years I have not found myself so rich, so independent or so tranquil'.[35]

Following the abolition of slavery in the British Caribbean, Mauritius and the Cape, compensation was paid to slave owners. William Beckford claimed for 660 slaves on four Jamaican estates and was awarded £12,803.[36] Thus even abolition brought an unexpected bonus – a reminder of the long shadow cast by the origins of the family's wealth.

# 6

# The Fonthill House and its Landscapes

Michael Cousins

## Alderman Beckford's early works at Fonthill

The part played by Alderman Beckford in the development of the park at Fonthill is typically overshadowed by the later works of his son, particularly the move westwards relative to the site of Fonthill Splendens and the building of Fonthill Abbey and its surrounding new park. It is not the intention here to focus on the latter, but rather the Old Park, as it is called, and the contributions there of Beckford, father and son.

For Britain, the eighteenth century heralded major changes to tastes in, and commentary on, gardening. Indeed, as a follower of the formal fashions brought over from the Continent at the start of the century, the middle period saw Britain leading the landscape revolution, particularly with the appearance of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and his contemporaries. This outdoor evolution typically went hand-in-hand with the prevailing trend of building new houses in the Classical style, and vice versa.

At the start of that new century, the Fonthill estate was owned by Francis Cottington (made 1st Baron Cottington in 1716), and upon his death in 1728 it passed to his son, also Francis. It may have been during his tenure that the house, with its stable block, received an early-Georgian remodelling, before Alderman Beckford acquired the Fonthill estate.[1] John Loveday of Caversham, a prolific traveller and observer, noted in 1738 during his tour of Wiltshire: 'In a bottom Mr Cottington has a very large old Seat of Stone at Fonthill […] many Workmen are now employed about It; Sure this Gentleman has a considerable Estate at Blewberry in Berkshire.'[2]

Two paintings by George Lambert, one certainly of 1740,[3] show this altered house (see Chapter 3 Figure 3.15), but the extent of Cottington's interest in the garden and park appears limited: the earlier gate lodge east of the house (as depicted

in Robert Thacker's painting; see Chapter 3 Figure 3.8) had gone by this time, to be replaced by a pair of gate piers closer to the road, as had a slender canal that lay between the gate lodge and the house, running north–south, which appears to have been filled in. To the south of the house lay a flat lawn, east of which Cottington built a tetrastyle, pedimented garden temple in the middle of a raised terraced walk, also on a north–south axis. Cottington sold the estate to Beckford in 1744/5.[4] While Beckford's subsequent work on this house is reasonably well recorded both visually and in writing, his work on the park has received little attention, but it was clearly a contiguous development.

The changes in garden design that flourished in the early eighteenth century in England seemingly bypassed Fonthill – Charles Bridgeman's schemes, for example, typified by geometrical patterns, long walks and radiating avenues, amphitheatres and elaborate parterres found considerable acceptance elsewhere, but not here. Indeed the decline of such layouts approximates with the time when Alderman Beckford's design for Fonthill gained momentum, in the incoming natural style, of which Stowe ably demonstrates the transition. Elements of Bridgeman's work were gradually done away with, and replaced first with William Kent's Elysian Fields and Alder Valley in the 1730s, followed by the Grecian Valley formed by the head gardener in the 1740s, one Lancelot Brown. A shallow valley is an apt way to describe the principal part of Fonthill's Old Park.

One of the Alderman's first acts, presumably set in motion before travelling to his plantations in Jamaica, was ostensibly philanthropic in nature, with the building of a new church (see Chapter 4 Figure 4.3). On his return from Jamaica, he set about other works. Col. James Pelham, cousin of Thomas Pelham-Holles (1st Duke of Newcastle), wrote of a visit to Claremont by, among others, 'Two M.r Beckfords that are brothers to my Lady Effingham', noting one 'has a Plantation on Jamaica, his Seat here is I think in Wiltshire where he is making fine Gardens &c. I never see a Man in Such Extacies as he was with Claremont, they were all prodigiously pleased with every thing.'[5] Beckford's 'fine Gardens' were visited four years later by the peregrinatious Richard Pococke, then archdeacon of Dublin:

> Beyond the park & opposite to the Grand front, Mr Beckford has built a Church, on the plan of Covent garden which is a good termination of the prospect.
>
> There is a large lawn that way & plantations to the west, an open Temple on the Side of the hill; & an open rotundo is building higher up on the hill; To the east is a broad serpentine river with a very handsom bridge of free Stone built over it of three arches, with a Stone Baluster. To the north is a grand gateway near the village, from which there is a gravel walk to the Grand front about a furlong in length.[6]

Pococke's description, and our understanding of the park at Fonthill, is enhanced by two paintings of the scene about the house around this time, now attributed to Antonio Joli (ca. 1700–77; see Chapter 11 and Chapter 3 Figures 3.18 and 3.20).[7]

The Alderman's activities were extensive. The creation of an artificial 'serpentine river', by damming a length of the Fonthill stream, a tributary of the River Nadder, is in itself a significant feat. Running parallel to this was a slender water course, almost a leat, which widened just south of what was actually a five-arch bridge; at this point a sham rustic bridge with a spectacular cascade was used to manage the overflow, or spill of the main water, a feature used in other parks like Wotton and Stowe.[8] In reality, the 'serpentine river' didn't flow anywhere: the southern end of this water terminated at a pond head with the leat merging into the original stream again.[9] The former public road was conveniently moved to the other side of the water from the house, rejoining the original route via the bridge. Here a narrow tunnel passed under the road, allowing private passage to the southern part of the park, circling back via the rustic bridge-cum-cascade (Figure 14.1). Passage from Fonthill Bishop to the north, therefore, was by one of two routes: the public road running east of the water over the aforementioned bridge (although there was a turnoff via a ford to reach Fonthill's outbuildings), and, for visitors to Fonthill Splendens, the private road through the magnificent gateway.

The garden-temple shown in the two Lambert paintings was presumably still extant at the time of the Alderman's acquisition of Fonthill.[10] It would have acted as a suitable stopping or resting point during a walk, or from which to view the house and water. When Pococke visited Fonthill in 1754, and as depicted in the two Joli paintings, he described 'an open Temple on the Side of the hill'. Close examination of these paintings suggests that the original building seen in Lambert's view was taken down, and perhaps re-used as part of a new building on gradually sloping ground, nestled in a backdrop of trees, further away from the main house. Hence

**Fig. 14.1** Detail from Antonio Joli (attributed), *Fonthill House*, showing the sham bridge and cascade.

Private collection, photograph © Jon Stone.

**Fig. 14.2** Detail from Antonio Joli (attributed), *Fonthill House,* showing the 'open Temple' and the rotunda.

Private collection, photograph © Jon Stone.

by ca. 1754 a prostyle portico fronting a five-bay structure can be seen in Joli's view, possibly planned as part of the garden work that was being undertaken in 1750.[11]

South-west of the house, at the highest point of this wooded sloping ground, was another temple. This building has previously been described as a pagoda, and so it appears in a later engraving taken from one of the two Joli paintings.[12] Closer examination of the paintings, however, indicates an open columned structure, almost certainly the rotunda noted by Pococke, albeit with a more conical-looking roof than a dome (Figure 14.2) – this would date the paintings to 1754, unless the artist was asked to add the feature before its construction, hence the atypical form of the roof might be his notion; or, it was painted in later.[13] Facing the house across the water to the east, deliberately set back on rising ground and paled off, was an equestrian statue on a monumental plinth (Figure 14.3). It is a feature that has received little commentary (see Chapter 3 for a suggestion even that it was not in fact ever built); it is quite enigmatic, and totally apposite to the character and flamboyance of Beckford senior.[14]

This then was the Alderman's Fonthill. Following the destruction of Fonthill House by fire in February 1755 he was freed from any vestigial constraints carried down through the constant remodelling of the original building and its surroundings. But he seemed in no hurry about its replacement: five years after the

**Fig. 14.3** Detail from Antonio Joli (attributed), *Fonthill House,* showing the equestrian statue.

Private collection, photograph © Jon Stone.

fire Philip Yorke remarked of the new house, 'the shell … is finished but no part of the inside fitted up'.[15]

While creating the new Fonthill 'Splendens' in sumptuous Palladian style, a combination of frivolity and rustication emerged in the park.

There has been much speculation as to when the grottoes at Fonthill (Figure 14.4) were created, and by whom. It becomes quite clear from two previously unpublished contemporary accounts that Alderman Beckford, and not his son, was responsible for those rockworks to the west of the river, as well as confirming that he instigated other features (such as the boathouse; Figure 14.5).

The first description, made by Edward Knight junior (d. 1812), the eldest son of a leading Midlands ironmaster, dates to 3 or 4 July 1761:

> Fonthill – Beckford's Rustic Gateway — New-House 140 by 650 __Coll.$^{de}$ 10 pairs of P.$^{s}$ join the house & offices. —— Ionic Port. 4 P.s 16 In Diam$^{r}$__Int.$^{n}$ 4..6–5..9 –4..6 behind a room 14 by 28 – View of the Water, Bridge &c. Shrubry ab 3 Miles round — Subterraneous passage – Umbrella Seat – Rockwork — Church —— Doric Rottond 8 P.$^{s}$ 22 In. D.$^{r}$ Interc.$^{n}$ 5..3_3 mutules – view to the House, water, lawn &c __Boat_House & Rockwork.[16]

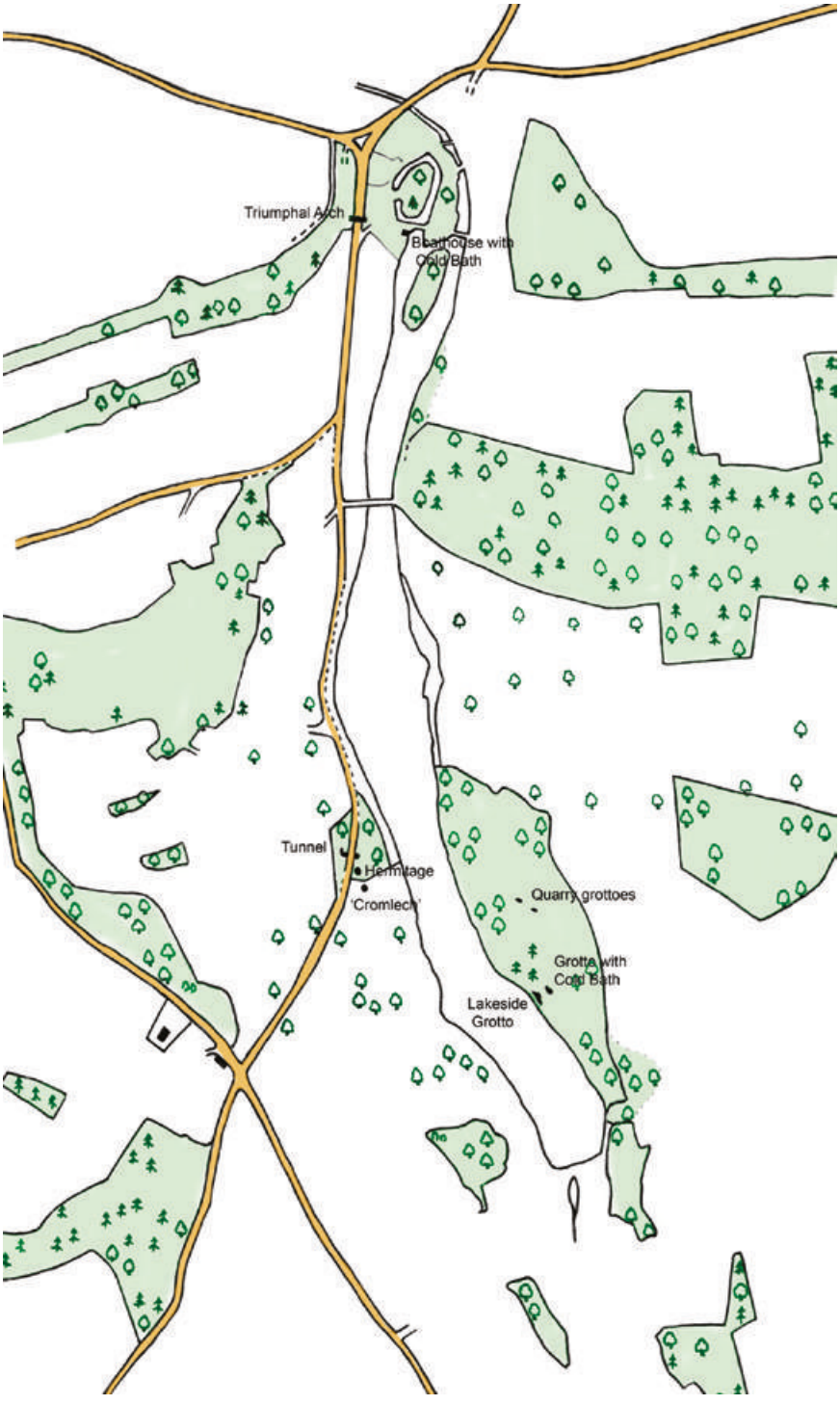



**Fig. 14.4** Map of Fonthill showing location of grottoes, etc.

Knight was describing the grounds west of the river, making an anticlockwise circuit: subterraneous clearly indicates a passage going below ground, rather than an arched passageway above; the 'Umbrella Seat' must have been nearby, even possibly on top of the rockwork that would correspond to the Hermitage and which may have been under construction. After reaching the church, which also acted to terminate a prospect, Knight turned back on himself, ascending the hill to the rotunda to look onto the house. His final path would have taken him north of this to reach the boathouse with its rusticated, or rockwork interior ornaments. It is fitting to ascribe the construction of this and the seemingly contemporaneous gateway to the Alderman's time, although their architect is still unknown.[17] We hear no more of the 'Umbrella Seat' after its mention by Knight, but it may have followed the design of that at nearby Stourhead. The rotunda – under construction in 1754 and clearly completed – conformed to a fairly standard model. It may have replaced an earlier prospect tower shown in one of the two George Lambert paintings (see Chapter 3 Figure 3.15).[18] The Alderman was an early practitioner in using the church as an eye-catcher and garden feature, and the example here bears comparison with those at West Wycombe and Nuneham Courtenay.

Edward Knight was a friend and correspondent of William Shenstone, and possessed an enthusiasm for architecture and gardens, as evinced by the accounts of his travels wherein he recorded key details of the noted estates of the time. It is probable that his interest would embrace aspects relating to the picturesque, for his relations included Richard Payne Knight of Downton, and Thomas Johnes II of Hafod.

The second description, written in the summer of 1766, possibly comes from the architect James Essex:

> M.r Beckford's House was not finish'd, but appeared to be intended as magnificent as most in England … The Bed Chambers particularly grand. … You ascend a Flight of steps to the House, which bring you under an Ionic Colonnade – the Offices are united with the House by a Piazza of the Doric Order. __
>
> The Chimney Pieces in the the [sic] Work of Moore of London, cost 400£ each – Caryatides support the entablature.
>
> There are two very fine Rooms, one intended for Music, in which there is an Alcove for the Organ, the other for a Picture Gallery. … The Garden are [sic] pretty – there is a subterraneous Grot winding 30 yards. ___ The Hermitage adorn'd with Shells and Spars, is well imagined.[19]

Again, our visitor kept to the western grounds, but by now the Hermitage had certainly received its essential and striking decoration, some of which was noted much later, in 1834.[20] Embedded fragments and impressions of shells still remain today in the roof of the main chamber: on the left, an alcove with an inclined shaft passing to the outside throws light on the battered torso of a statue, to the right, a small

**Fig. 14.5** The boathouse interior showing the cold bath.

**Fig. 14.6** The Hermitage: ogee frame with carved sitting figure.
Photograph © Michael Cousins.

antechamber fitted out with a fireplace. Inserted in the rear wall of the Hermitage, framed by a flattened ogee arch, is a reclining figure of a bearded man, possibly meant to represent a hermit (Figure 14.6); below this is evidence of a projecting sill or bench, long gone.

That Fonthill House was still not finished is not altogether surprising as from ca. 1762 the Alderman was diverted with the building of a second house at Witham designed by Robert Adam. Cost did not appear to be of any concern in this, according to his Stourhead neighbour the banker Henry Hoare: 'The day Lord & Lady Pembrooke dined here they stop'd at M.r Beckford's & His Lordship told Them He wallow'd in money & therefore built 2 Houses to get rid of it.' (See Chapter 4 for discussion of Witham.)[21]

It is worth noting that the Adam office produced for the Alderman three finished drawings of designs for bridges at Fonthill. While each of the proposals is different, all feature reclining figures of Bacchus holding a cornucopia.[22] The view through the central arch of one of these designs depicts a series of three grotto-like arched structures on the distant bank, with rising ground behind, planted with trees. Roughly sketched in pencil, and seemingly capricious, they suggest water gently cascading over a raised floor into the lake below. None of the Adam schemes was executed, but the notion of having a statue of a mythical figure in the grounds may have taken hold. A sketchbook by J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851) includes a number of preparatory sketches and finished watercolours of Fonthill made in 1799, including one that has acquired the title *Trees by the Lake in Old Fonthill Park, with a River God seated among Rushes*.[23] It is difficult to establish the precise location of Turner's sketch, and nothing else is known of the 'River God'; there is no

other evidence to support the view that such a figure was installed in the boathouse at Fonthill.[24]

The Alderman's planting campaign at Fonthill is less easy to gauge, and it was never going to reach maturity in his lifetime. We know that he was the purchaser of a five guinea Bartram Box of seeds in 1754,[25] suggesting some botanical interests, and by 1761 some three miles of shrubbery had been planted. In 1760, Mrs Beckford paid a visit to Hester Pitt, the wife of William Pitt, Lord Chatham, at their residence in Kent, Hayes Place, the account of which illustrates that planting at Fonthill had been going on, and at some expense. Escorting her guest around, Hester

> walkd in the discretest manner, but at the same time contrived to Shew Her [Mrs Beckford] much the Largest part of Hayes Ground, with which I was not at all tired, and was perfectly Satisfied with her manner of seeing it and the Impression it made. She was extremely sorry for not having seen it Sooner, that the Swells at Fonthill might have Copied Those that enclose Bridge Lane and the Pond, Their Shape having Struck Her mightily as having much more Grace and Beauty with Less expence of Trees than Those she had at Home.[26]

Whether the Alderman's earlier visit to Claremont had any influence on the lay-out of the park at Fonthill is doubtful. Despite having lost many of its straight and formal devices (although it retained Bridgeman's amphitheatre), the grounds at Claremont must have felt constrained to the Alderman. Vanbrugh's lofty belvedere there had been in place many years (as had four temples), but it was the later tower at Stourhead that seems to have prompted the Alderman to follow suit at Fonthill, rather than this belvedere. Claremont's grotto, however, was under construction during the visit in the summer of 1750 and the Alderman may have recalled this when creating his subterraneous feature and Hermitage at Fonthill. The planting at Claremont, and certainly Kent's clumps, seem to have made little impact on Beckford, and there is no evidence of professional assistance at Fonthill. The late-eighteenth-century exponent of the picturesque, William Gilpin, provided a later account of Fonthill, written around 1778. It bespeaks the Alderman's hand in the shaping of the grounds (rather than his son's): 'The ground, though *artificially formed*, *slopes well* to the river on each side, and beyond the bridge opens into a sweet retiring valley.'[27]

## The first grottoes

The precedent for the Alderman's tunnel at Fonthill is surely that at Alexander Pope's house at Twickenham, first created in 1720 to 1725 and extended nearly 20 years later. His famous grotto there had its parallel in Fonthill's Hermitage (Figure 14.7). Grotto and garden style evolved contiguously, with architectural feature giving way to rustic stone work and, initially, shell ornamentation, which

**Fig. 14.7** The Hermitage.



in turn yielded to mineral work, the grotto at Goldney Hall, Bristol, being another early use of that style. More attention was soon placed on the setting and integration of grottoes into the overall layout, with existing structures and their surroundings being adapted to be more aesthetically pleasing, although this was not universal. The task was to artificially reproduce or even outdo what nature could offer; it was a theme that the Alderman's son held close to his heart, and would later put into practice.

The subterraneous passage or 'Grot' at Fonthill allowed direct and concealed communication between the grounds either side of the Tisbury Road. That the Alderman's Hermitage should be 'adorn'd with Shells and Spars' is no surprise. While in Jamaica, he was instrumental in procuring materials for the Earl of Shaftesbury for his grotto at St Giles. These included '2 Casks of Tamarinds' and a further 'one thousand of Shells'.[28] Julian (or Julines) Beckford, one of the Alderman's brothers, was also a principal party to their conveyance, and it is worth noting that Julian Beckford is listed in the names of subscribers to the second part of Thomas Wright's *Universal Architecture*, i.e. 'Six Original Designs of GROTTOS', which shows a sustained family interest in the subject.

But who actually created the Hermitage, tunnel (Figure 14.8) and associated rockwork at Fonthill? Considering the fact that a Lane is mentioned in conjunction with the later grottoes at Fonthill, the fame of Joseph and Josiah Lane (father and son) as the pre-eminent grotto builders of the eighteenth century, plus their places of birth at Ashley Wood and Tisbury (east and south of Fonthill respectively) marks them out as obvious candidates, in this instance Joseph specifically.

**Fig. 14.8** The tunnel.
Photograph © Michael Cousins.

We know little of Joseph Lane's upbringing. The son of Thomas Lane of Ashley Wood, he was baptised on 28 August 1717 in Tisbury, and the earliest indication we have of his trade is from his marriage in 1747 when he is recorded as a stonecutter of Tisbury.[29] Without being overly speculative, it is possible that he was in some way involved in the creation of the grotto at Stourhead, for which William Privet submitted a bill in 1748 for £180.17s.6d.[30] While this work included an element of stonecutting, it is credible that Joseph acquired skills, and even excelled in rockwork of this nature. He may also have had a hand in the grotto at St Giles for Lord Shaftesbury (although there is no evidence to support this), adding further skills and knowledge to his repertoire; but the abundant shellwork there is almost certainly by the specialist John Castles.[31]

On 9 January 1753, Joseph married for the second time, to Deborah Ingram (his first wife, Mary Flippen, seemingly dying in childbirth). Exactly nine months later a son, Josiah, was baptised at Tisbury. By this time Joseph had risen from

a stonecutter to become a mason. As a local, and a skilled tradesman, a stronger case may be fielded for Joseph being involved in Alderman Beckford's alterations of the earlier Cottington house and other additions at Fonthill, and more probably the subsequent house after the former was destroyed in 1755. Indeed Joseph had highly desirable skills for the work at hand at Fonthill: both as mason and also because he could apply his expert eye as a stonecutter, for there was a readily available source of materials at a quarry near the house (later to be incorporated into the Alpine Gardens).

We can but surmise how exactly the Alderman came to hear of Joseph's particular talent, and then directed him to create the Hermitage and tunnel, but engaged in his own right, Joseph's work tallies with Richard Warner's later comment about 'Mr. Lane, who exhibited the earliest specimen of his talents in the construction of a grotto, on a very small scale, at Fonthill'.[32] With Fonthill being the place of Joseph Lane's emergence into the world of grottoes, his (and his son's) subsequent employment at Painshill, and not vice versa, is an explicable step. Painshill's owner, Charles Hamilton, was Beckford's maternal uncle;[33] certainly Lane senior must have been recognised as a capable grotto builder from 1763 when he was working at Painshill.[34] Just prior to that, he had constructed a cascade and rockwork cave at Loakes manor house (now Wycombe Abbey), Buckinghamshire, for William, Earl of Shelburne.[35]

This was not a one-way interplay of ideas. Alderman Beckford's visit in 1750 to Claremont, which may have inspired Fonthill's early rockwork features, has already been noted. Stourhead was almost certainly another influential park, and several visits of exchange are recorded, and in 1768, at a time when the Alderman's works were maturing, he made a visit to Lord Lyttelton at Hagley, which Lyttelton reciprocated the following year.[36] Laurent Châtel has commented on the 'paucity of material relating to Fonthill' in the principal Beckford archives,[37] and this is especially so following the death of the Alderman and the period before his son's majority. Hence the accounts provided by visitors provide a particularly crucial and rich source of information. 1769 proved a very fruitful year, and two descriptions, by Sophia, Lady Shelburne of Bowood (1745–71), and the Irish politician John Parnell (1745–1801), who visited two months apart, are worth quoting at length as much for their contrasting views as well as detail. Lady Shelburne wrote,

> The House is a Large & Handsome Stone Building with two wings but is Situated much too near the Road & confin'd on one side by a Common … after dinner they shew'd us the Stables & the Lodging for the Stable people which makes a very fine House at some distance from the other & in a better Situation we took a short walk in the Shrubbery & drank tea in the Banqueting House The Shrubbery is at a distance from the House the Walk to it rough & the whole place, tho' very large, I think inferior to the Inside in Beauty […] the Evening being very fine Mrs Beckford carried me a short drive about a shrubbery I had not seen.[38]

Parnell, on the other hand, and on the whole, did not take to Fonthill:

> a Knoll coverd with well grown old trees on one side and a Peice of water on the other Leaves scarce Place for so Great a Pile as the House and offices to stand in and the Paltry little Evergreen clumps Particularly scots firr crowding on the Brow of the Knoll & under the old Sycamores Oak &c on it add to the smallness of the Lawn & makes the House Preposterous, How can planters obtrude a few little Round Petty Paties of Evergreens in a spott coverd with scatterd old trees of full growth is it a Pleasure to see the young firr stunted scalded and killd by the Dripping Branches of the Old forest trees or are we to cutt down the great trees spotting a Lawn in hopes the young ones will soon grow up to supply their Place Either Surely is a Detestable species of Improvement there is a fine square of Stabling Building at Beckfords and behind them a Range of farm offices the whole about 200 yards from the House well conceald […] the Bridge over the artificial Peice of water at Aldemn Beckfords is an hideous Piece of architecture Scarcely fitt for the most Private Part of a trading City only tolerable as being strong Enough to Bear Perpetual Waggons I never saw such a thing in my life in the Regions of taste Built as an ornament.[39]

## After the Alderman

Alderman Beckford died on 21 June 1770, and his son, who was just nine, inherited estates at home and abroad, and considerable wealth. A notable incident sheds light on the size and make-up of Fonthill at this time. In the 'Bill of Complaint of William Beckford' in which, until William came of age, Maria, the Alderman's widow, stated the case for her continued repair and maintenance of Fonthill, it was noted that

> the said House and ffurniture with the Kitchen Garden and Pleasure Ground near the Water Grist Mill and the Park with some Land enclosed with the said Park and lying contiguous and near to the House containing in the whole about two hundred and twenty six acres part of which Park and Land containing about one hundred acres is ornamented with Timber Trees and plantations of other Trees and Shrubs…[40]

Reverend Mr John Lettice, Beckford's long-standing tutor, frequently mentioned with respect to Beckford's tours, receives scant recognition with regard to Fonthill itself, but according to Beckford's earliest biographer he played a role in the subsequent layout of the park.[41]

By 1776 the Alderman's planting was maturing: 'a fine Grove of Oaks with clumps of evergreens on y$^{e}$ left of the House is very picturesque and there is a fine peice of water', remarked Mrs Lybbe Powys, concluding: 'otherwise the situation is disagreeable'.[42] The Andrews and Dury map of 1773 (see Chapter 3 Figure 3.22)[43] still

shows the principal public road as being to the east of the water and crossing via the stone bridge, although there appears to have been a return of a road running south from the grand arch to join this public road, where it was probably gated. This accords with William Gilpin's brief description written about eight years after the Alderman's death, in which he records the bridge as still being present, but with his typical sting: 'It [Fonthill] takes its name from a woody hill and fountain hard by it, from which rises a stream that assists in forming an artificial river, decorated by a very sumptuous bridge. If the bridge had been more simple, the scene about it would have been more pleasing.'[44]

In part, the Alderman's shrubbery lined the Tisbury road, but the greater part – some three miles – continued round the park in a regular zig-zag, and the grounds, 'though not variegated; were considered pretty'. The situation of the house, however, came in for criticism, being low down and subject to mists, and also censured for 'the prospect from the house in front, which is so very dreary, that, in winter it must be absolutely dreadful'. Helpful advice followed: 'Probably, with some pains, Mr. Beckford might obtain permission to plant a wood along the skirts of the hill, (the lands not being his own) which might, in some degree, screen the object I complain of. The improvement would certainly be a great one.'[45] Ultimately, once Fonthill Abbey was complete, William Beckford opted for a more permanent solution and had most of his father's Splendens pulled down.

## Coming of age

William Beckford, it appears, held true to maternal and guardians' guidance during his minority, at least with regard to Fonthill, and any works executed there – limited though they may have been – seem to have been undertaken with Maria Beckford's blessing. The period following his father's death comes across as that of a young man formulating ideas and visionary, romantic dreams, typically by putting pen to paper, but also with more practical schemes for Fonthill's landscape. Upon attaining his majority in 1781, these began to take physical shape. He engaged James Wyatt (1746–1813) to draw up a proposal for enlarging the stretch of water north of Splendens by taking in Marsh Common, adding a number of islands and creating a cascade, and for the making of a new road to the east, crossing to the west bank via an iron bridge of about a 100-foot span.[46] Clearly the road running from the arch past the house had by then become a public one again, but with a plan – probably Beckford's – to revert to private. Wyatt's design was never implemented – he would come back for grander affairs later – but it showed an intent to develop away from the house. Indeed, aside from the house, Beckford effectively abandoned the west side of the Old Park in favour of opportunities to the east:

> The stone of the present Fonthill House, built by the late Mr. Beckford, was taken from a quarry on the Eastern shore of the Lake, at an inconsiderable

> distance from the scite of the mansion itself. Several acres of rocky ground, which formed this quarry, continued after the completion of the building still open; and exhibiting nothing but large naked masses of white stone and ugly excavations, and those almost fronting the house, it was resolved to cover every part of this quarry, some picturesque features of rock excepted, with soil brought from a distance by dint of labour, and then to plant the ground with oak, beech, elm, larch, fir, &c. leaving green walks, bordered with shrubs and flowers, and such other spaces open, as good taste suggested, according to the nature of the ground.[47]

This work was reportedly carried out by the Alderman;[48] James Morrison would also develop this area in 1838.[49] Nonetheless, the rugged terrain, quarries and outcroppings would have had a natural appeal to William Beckford, certainly following his early tours, evoking memories of travels and the scenery that so captivated him. A Swiss visitor, Henry Meister, would later note the similarity to the Alpine scenery Beckford admired on his travels (see Chapter 10).

> This maze of hill and wood; one while descending with us into a deep valley; another time, mounting us up high hills from whose tops we descried immense prospects, extending over several counties, and bounded either by the sea or sky. These views were continually changing to a new country, and I thought myself by turns in Switzerland, in France, in England, and in America.[50]

## New water, new grottoes

From 1781 to 1784, William Beckford extended his quarry planting 'along the adjoining hills which hang over the Lake'. But what Beckford then achieved with the water was significantly more dramatic than Wyatt's plan. Beckford did away with his father's confined river and its neighbouring sinuous channel; in their stead he created a dam and waterfall at the southern end, and effected 'an enlargement of the bed of the river, and the removal of a stone bridge of several arches, by which the water could no longer be crossed'.[51] From a practical standpoint, the removal of the bridge would probably have preceded the flooding; Britton, writing in 1801, 'was informed it had been removed twenty years ago'.[52] The Reverend John Swete (1752–1821) of Oxton in Devon, a prolific traveller of the late eighteenth century, left the following account of his visit, made in the autumn of 1783, indicating that the water had been drained in order to undertake the works.

> … all at once burst on my right, the house, and grounds of Fonthill and leaving the road, I ascended the summit of a hill on my left, where is a circular plantation of firs – from whence I had a fine View of the whole Scenery beneath which was in itself very attractive – descending to the road it pas't

> through a small ragged Village, and entering a fine rustic arch with a lodge on each side, I reach'd the lawn before the house, which is in front a handsome Structure of white stone, with two wings projecting, and joind to the house by a Colonnade – the mount on the right is most delightfully wooded, though its effect is partly lost by being so near to the house – the back grounds are charming but the stream that runs through is so small, that at this time, what little water was in the bed, appear'd in a state of Stagnation.[53]

After several years of assimilation, the 'different form of the shores and extension now given to the breadth of the water have entirely changed its former aspect and character, and rendered it worthy of its present appellation of a Lake'.[54] In reality it had been transformed into flowing water. This was just part of Beckford's evolving scheme for Fonthill: Redding wrote that 'the east bank was ornamented with rocks, caverns, baths, and grottoes in the taste of the earlier part of the century…'.[55] Typically, however, this style of ornamentation did not prevail until the second half of the eighteenth century, and towards the end, particularly, the less decorated form started to dominate.

Beckford was 23 when these works were underway, as revealed in a series of letters to Dr Samuel Henley (1740–1815). In the first, Beckford asked 'If you are to visit D[evonshire] this summer I trust you will not pass by Fonthill without casting an eye upon my rocks and water, which is wonderfully expanded.' In the next letter, written a couple of months later, it seems that Henley had yet to visit Beckford, who encouraged him by saying 'we should enjoy my new creation of wood & water'. This time there is no doubt as to the builder of at least one grotto and its location, which figures in the third plea for a visit: 'Mr Lane is rockifying, not in high places, but in a snug copse by the river side, where I spend many an hour in dreaming abt my unfortunate princes [Vathek's companions], & contriving reasonable ways & means of sending them to the Devil.'[56]

By the early 1780s, Joseph and Josiah Lane had become the foremost grotto-builders and ornamenters in England: their works by that time included grottoes at Painshill, Oatlands (a reworking of Stephen Wright's more formal affair), Wimbledon House, and probably the decoration of that at Ascot Place; all extensive and lengthy commissions featuring their distinctive, almost trademark, spar decoration with banded stalactites. At Fonthill, however, this 'rockifying' was solely Josiah's, his father having died in the summer of 1784.[57] One of the best descriptions of Beckford's early achievements comes in 1791 from a Dutch visitor, Baron Johan Frederik Willem van Spaen van Biljoen:

> The parkland matches the house both in beauty and elegance – nowhere have we seen finer lawns so well maintained and of such large expanse stretching over the hillsides, with the valley occupied by a large river which flows over a fine waterfall of some 25 to 30 ft; there are several grottoes cut in the living rock; to achieve this effect, very tasteful use has been made of the quarries

which furnished the building materials for the house; the entrance to these grottoes is masked with creepers. There are also some artificial grottoes, a particularly fine one with a cold bath [Figure 14.9] and another where the water seeping from the top was forming stalactites. Men were occupied in levelling the irregularities of a hill so that the slope was swarming with a

**Fig. 14.9** The grotto and cold bath.

> quantity of workmen, who, taken together with a flock of some 200 or 300 sheep, greatly animated a landscape already very picturesque in itself.[58]

Van Spaen clearly distinguishes between the quarry grottoes and the creations of Lane – other contemporary accounts also confirm these two artificial grottoes in this area. The principal grotto lay by the water's edge but was approached from above, as described by Meister:

> Following a path covered with moss, and bordered with beds of flowers intermixed with clumps of the most delightful shrubs, and of the wild laurel, the verdure of which is so pleasant to the sight, we arrived at a small dome, which served as an entrance to a spacious grotto that had its principal front towards the river. At the end of this grotto which has none of the trifling ornaments of shell-work, but seems constructed by large masses of rock piled together in a picturesque confusion, a fountain throws out its chrystal streams, which, falling with a gentle murmur into a rustic bason, is conveyed under the rock and mingles with the waters of the river. As air is continually passing through the two domes that serve as entrances, the grotto is as dry as the best ventilated room.[59]

John Britton's description of 1801 confirms the grotto to be by 'the well known Lane', whom he also acclaimed as 'a man who transfixed some of the romantic scenes of Salvator into English ground'.[60] Britton adds even more colour and detail of the grotto's decoration and surrounding planting:

> It is externally formed of large masses of rock, and ornamented within by grotesque petrifactions, stalactites, madrepores [corals of the common reef-building type], &c. aquatic plants and flowers shooting from the crevices. Its large interior space resounds with perennial springs trickling from various parts, and through channels here visible, and there unseen, hurrying along till lost in the waters of the lake. Issuing from the inclosure of the grotto by a winding path of shrubs, we come across a broad strait terrace of considerable length, bordered on the left by a lofty plantation, and on the right enlightened by the water. At the farther end of this walk we bid adieu to the Alpine Gardens.[61]

In 1822, just before the impending sale of Fonthill Abbey, *The Times* reported:

> the range of cave below is divided into three arched chambers; and, from the centre vaults of these there is an opening to the lake, which flows up a miniature creek, half way into the apartment. There is something, in fine weather, very delightful about the place. The vaulted roof of this last centre cavern we mentioned runs low towards the front that opens upon the water, so that the stranger's prospect (standing erect) scarcely reaches across the lake.[62]

Here, continued *The Times*, 'there is no shell work, no fossil, no baby-house trumpery…' Recent examination of the structure reveals that in places it had been constructed by cut and finished stone, suggesting re-use of materials from Splendens or the former house. Slightly higher up from this grotto was the more cave-like structure (van Spaen's 'particularly fine' grotto):

> At a small distance from this grotto is a large cave, in which nature or art, for it is not easy to discover which, has formed several deep fissures, some having the appearance of cells, and others answering the purpose of baths. The middle of this cavern is entirely open on the top, except that a sort of covering is formed by the shrubs which have planted themselves in the crevices of the rock, and a fine tree that seems to be planted by the hand of a magician in the centre of this retreat, springing out of a bed of violets bordered with green turf.[63]

This 'rude basin of rock, surrounded by crags, and overhung with lofty trees', as it was later depicted, received the 'drizzlings of a tiny stream, called the "Petrifying Spring"'.[64]

Less clear is whether Josiah Lane was responsible for what has been taken for a third grotto, [65] basically a vertical outcropping of rocks just behind the spring. This may date to James Morrison's time, when he sought to improve the water flow to the cold bath ('the Rock') and from that to the lower grotto:

> Hayter has been in the Quarry since poor Humphrey's death, he has been working at the Grotto about the Water works […] We have made the two small ponds to hold water above the Rock where the Bath is, made it fall out of one with the other, and Carried it from thence into the Bath in the Rock which we have re clay'd_ and made to hold and is now full of Water, and from thence Carried it thro' to the Grotto, this makes the Rock & Grotto quite lively to what it has been for many years past — The water is beautiful and Clear, there is but one fault, namely we have not enough of it, but we Cannot get more without taking it from the Spring at the Factory ~~and~~ this would be an expensive affair.[66]

A number of writers have commented on the similarities between the Alpine Gardens and the description of the grounds of the fictional 'Beachly' in Elizabeth Hervey's novel, *Melissa and Marcia or the Two Sisters*[67] (a narrative that Beckford later borrowed from his half-sister almost word for word in his *Modern Novel Writing*).[68] There are certainly features that surface in Hervey's writing, such as the temples and grottoes, which suggest that she was using Fonthill as the model, but there are also subtle differences such as her 'brilliant spars and curious shells' which were never present in these grottoes. Hervey paints a romanticised scene,

with her idealised trimmings, and it would be wrong to take all of her description as fact.[69]

What is telling at Fonthill from all of these narratives is a clear transition in style from the Lanes' previous grottoes: gone are the unnatural spar decorations and abundance of artificial stalactites (or roof pendants), replaced by a form much more rustic and massive in character. Whether this was at Beckford's behest or a suggestion on the part of Josiah Lane is unknown, although the former is more likely.

The commencement and extent of Beckford's planting activities is more difficult to pin down with precision; the works previously discussed would indicate that possession of the estate refers to his coming of age in 1781, and this is the likely context that, in 1797, the *European Magazine* reported on his contribution:

> Although parts of the original estate at Fonthill are covered with fine oak timber, yet some thousand acres of the ground purchased by Mr. Beckford's father, as well as by himself, the leases of which have been continually falling in, were unplanted. Not to mention the great plantation begun by the late Mr. Beckford, the present gentleman has been, every year since his possession, continuing them upon a grander scale. Several hundred thousand trees, and, some years, not less than a million, and those of all the different sorts of forest wood, and of various tribes of exotic plants and shrubs, often constitute the work but of a single season.[70]

William Beckford's creation of the Alpine Gardens ranks as a singular early accomplishment; yet Cyrus Redding's account of when this came about is questionable. It was a time when the Alderman's plantation on the east bank had 'grown to large-sized trees, and become a flourishing wood'; Lettice was 'instructing the Misses Beckford',[71] and their father had just returned from Aranjuez – this would suggest the late spring of 1796. In the aforementioned area, Lettice 'suggested that walks should be made of nearly a mile in extent, in order to render that wild spot pleasanter for the ladies, who seemed to have a partiality for it'. Beckford clearly agreed, and had workmen set about the task, 'in what afterwards had the name of the "Alpine Garden"'.[72] Visitors' accounts (such as those by van Spaen, Meister and Drysdale), however, show that even before this time this was a well-frequented area, replete with carriage roads and many paths, with the quarries having been developed into scenic features.[73]

Contemporary accounts indicate that visitors were kept to the east of the water, probably at Beckford's direction. About this immediate region were several other features. Meister noted three 'greatly neglected' temples:

> That which is dedicated to Hercules, is built on a small eminence almost disjoined from the other hills. The temple of the Naiad, the guardian of this

> beautiful valley, is in a secret cavern, ornamented in the Etruscan taste, on the banks of the river with whose stream she waters it. The temple of Jesus Christ [the parish church] is at a distance from the boundary of these vast domains.[74]

The neglect suggests that these structures were the work of the Alderman and subsequently abandoned to nature by his son. Towards the highest region of the Alpine Gardens was to be found 'a root-house with a bowling-green in front, encircled with lofty firs, intermingled with lilac, woodbine, and laurel'. Further winding walks led through open groves and 'almost impenetrable wood', and on the highest ground of the quarries Beckford erected 'a rustic rotunda, called the Paliaro. It is thatched with straw, like the huts of the Calabrian shepherds; and supported by six rude unbarked firs as columns.' Later, at the turn of the century, on 'a smooth level of green turf on top of a rock', Beckford planned to place 'an urn or sarcophagus […] dedicated to the memory of Alexander Cozens, an artist of much original genius, and who was particularly partial to this spot'.[75]

Meister alludes to the remains of a very ancient tower and 'two caves of the most romantic appearance', one of them covered with vine and ivy, seemingly dedicated to the worship of Bacchus (Figure 14.10). Mowl incorrectly transports readers to the wrong side of the Old Park, and infers that the so-called 'cromlech' was, in fact, this ancient tower.[76] Meister is clearly still in the area of the Alpine Gardens, and the 'two caves' and their drapery conform to those at the quarry lawn.

Writing in 1823, Rutter refers to how Beckford, before the building of the Abbey, was focused on 'the erection of a tower on the summit of the highest hill upon


**Fig. 14.10** Engraving of the quarry grottoes in the Alpine Garden.

John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey*, 1823.

the estate, the foundations of which had been already laid by the late Alderman, after a design similar to the celebrated tower of Alfred at Stourhead…'.[77] However, it could hardly be deemed ancient – just never completed – and was on an entirely different part of the estate to the west, as Elizabeth Hervey noted in 1797, when she observed 'the ruins on Stope's beacon'.[78]

Josiah Lane's return to Fonthill in 1794 is more circumspect – 'a carved roundel' saying 'J. L. 1794' is all that we have to go on,[79] and even the deciphering of the inscription itself has been doubted, besides the possibility that the initials also happen to be those of John Lettice. Of more reliable substance, following an improvement in income from Beckford's plantations, is a letter to his agent James Wildman in August 1790: '… My works at Fonthill, buildings, planting etc. are going on very briskly. I have been raising towers and digging Grottoes.'[80] What this tower was at this time is uncertain, unless he had already started to resurrect his father's work on Stop's Beacon.[81] As to the grottoes, the work could refer to those in the Alpine Gardens (that with the cold bath above the lakeside grotto) or the so-called 'cromlech' built just south of the copse of the Hermitage wood (Figure 14.11). This structure, which certainly carries a more primitive air about it, is formed of two levels; too diminutive for occupancy in the lower one (although ideal for Beckford's dwarf)[82] with small steps leading up to a small viewing platform above. Possibly it was built on, or near to, the site of his father's 'Umbrella Seat'?

By the end of 1796, Beckford and Wyatt had started work on their grander scheme beyond the confines of the Old Park. An extract from a letter of 1799 suggests abandonment of the former gardens – although Fonthill House was evidently still well-maintained – in favour of extensive planting about the Abbey grounds.

**Fig. 14.11** The 'cromlech'.

> … We now got to Deptford Inn took fresh Horses and about eight mile from that Place is Fonthill, nothing can exceed the splendour, and magnificence of the House and every thing belonging to it the only Fault is that your eye is fatigued with the quantity of Gold that is about the House, There are some fine Pictures two beautiful Landscapes by Claud he has ~~fitted~~ furnished one Room in the Turkish style, but it is impossible to describe the extravagance of all we saw, his whole time and thoughts are taken up about the Abbey which is not to be a Church but in Rooms as any other House, but to exceed any thing in the Country, The Gardens are very bad, the Grounds are very extensive but hardly to be called beautifull there is a fine Peice of artificial water & some Good Trees, he is continually planting and improving…[83]

## Parallels with Fonthill in other grottoes

Lane's lakeside grotto at Fonthill was deliberately hidden – with the intent of solitude – and incorporated an opening onto calming waters (Figure 14.12). In this respect, there are clear echoes of the grotto at Stourhead, and that at Painshill, Charles Hamilton's superlative creation in Surrey, both of which had apertures to view their respective lakes. But it was this more rugged and natural form of grotto-work that Josiah Lane introduced at Fonthill which would lend itself to further commissions at other Wiltshire estates: the cascade with its intertwining tunnels – 'formed of *tumblers* found near the spot' – and separate hermitage at Bowood, built

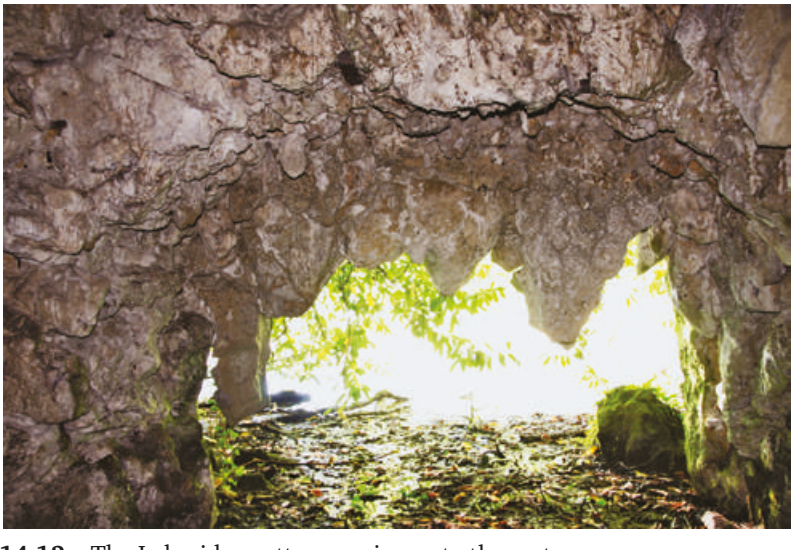


**Fig. 14.12** The Lakeside grotto, opening onto the water.

from 1785 to 1788 for the Marquess of Lansdowne,[84] and a grotto at Old Wardour for the 8th Lord Arundell a few years later. The elevated position of the latter provided a prospect beyond the old castle towards the lake; a parallel may be drawn with the siting of Fonthill's 'cromlech', which would have provided a similar view across Beckford's new lake. The 'cromlech', even if not related to the aforementioned grottoes being dug in 1790, was probably constructed around the same time as Wardour's, an account of which illustrates an historical context that Beckford would have appreciated:

> One of the fields [at Place Farm] is called Lost Stone, and in the centre of it was formerly a circular work, with a vallum set round with stones. About the year 1792, Lord Arundell employing the celebrated constructor of rock work, Josiah Lane, to form a grotto at Wardour, these stones were removed. In the centre of the original work, as far as I can now gather from the report of those who remember it, stood three upright unhewn stones of large dimensions, placed so as to form three sides of a square, and in the space beneath some human bones were found. These three stones were placed near the old castle at Wardour, and the bones deposited underneath.[85]

While the builder of the grotto at Belcombe Court near Bradford-on-Avon (Figure 14.13) has not been identified it can be dated to post-1770, and shares enough similarities with the 'cromlech' at Fonthill, the grotto at Wardour, and elements of the rockwork at Bowood, to suggest Lane as the principal contender.[86] The grotto

**Fig. 14.13** Belcombe Court grotto, Bradford-on-Avon.

**Fig. 14.14** Bowden Park grotto.
Photograph © Michael Cousins.

at Bowden Park (Figure 14.14), probably for Barnard Dickenson (1746–1814),[87] likewise lacks builder and date of construction, and the dearth of archival information meant restoration after significant storm damage in the 1980s of the interior – with its prominent needle-like stalactites – was achieved from limited photographic evidence and from memory. If this was by Josiah Lane, then it marks a return to the styles of Painshill, Oatlands and Ascot Place rather than that at Fonthill. The decoration of Ascot Place is typical Lane, even if the rockwork construction was 'by one Turnbull, a Scotch mason'.[88] Certainly Lane's final work for C. N. Pallmer (ca. 1819) at Norbiton Place, Surrey, according to a lone description, sounds remarkably like that at Oatlands, and its positioning over water follows this predecessor. If so, this would support Lane reverting to his earlier style on projects carried out post-Fonthill, and would also strengthen the case for Lane at Bowden Park. Such reversion to an earlier style also suggests a significant level of involvement from Beckford in the design of the Fonthill grottoes.

It was John Claudius Loudon, the gardening authority of the time, who conveys the sad end of Josiah Lane:

> His name was Josiah Lane, and he was a native of the adjoining parish of Tisbury, in the workhouse of which he died last year, at a great age! He was perfectly ignorant, but certainly had a genius for this kind of construction. He used to do all the work with his own hands, and be paid at the rate of about two guineas a week; but, like other money-getting men with ill-regulated minds, he never thought of making provision for age.[89]

Josiah was buried on 28 January 1833, aged 79. His father Joseph, who probably created the first of the Fonthill grottoes, by all accounts, appears to have had considerably more business sense.[90]

## A new owner

William Beckford left Fonthill in 1822 having sold the estate to John Farquhar, whose nephew, George Mortimer, acquired the remains of Splendens and 1,200 acres of surrounding ground upon Farquhar's apoplectic demise in 1826. Three years later the majority of the Old Park and the Pavilion (the converted kitchen wing of the old mansion) were sold to James Morrison. In describing Fonthill in 1833, Loudon echoed previous comments that the 'house is badly placed, and it does not appear to us to be much improved by some immense clumps which Mr. Farquhar's nephew has planted near it'. Loudon continued:

> The same individual had the beautiful mosaic flooring of the cave taken up, and, in relaying it, placed a large mariner's compass of black and white marble in the centre. The orifice in the roof of this cave, by which it is lighted, is unprotected by any fence or grating, and may be considered as a trap for the destruction of men or other animals. We very nearly fell into it, and in consequence wrote to Mr. Morrison, who has since informed us that he immediately afterwards surrounded the opening by a fence.[91]

Which cave is being referred to is not clear, but previous commentaries and this description would suggest it was that part of the cold bath, of which the 'middle of this cavern is entirely open on the top, except that a sort of covering is formed by the shrubs'.[92]

Besides transforming the Pavilion, Morrison's initial works focused on returning the estate to order and implementing numerous additions and changes for which he used the services of the architect John Buonarotti Papworth (1775–1847).[93] The creation of various islands was planned (first on the side of the lake opposite the house, then by the pond head); other employments included the planting of trees, shrubberies and 'Flower beds upon the Lawn'. The quarry came in for particular attention, for example: 'Humphries has planted a good deal about the Quarry Shrubs, Fern, Tuscan, Adders Tongue &C, and likewise planted out a good many of the Trees which were in the Garden': American trees and shrubs were especially favoured, the latter especially at the Rookery. Papworth was also requested to make 'a few sketches of seats for the grounds', made from 'woods of different kinds',[94] and during the winter of 1836–7 the Hermitage was brought back to prominence, with the area grubbed-up and walled or fenced from the nearby road.

In 1837, James Combes (Morrison's steward) wrote: 'I wish you were here to enjoy the shady walks and the singing of the Birds last evening as the Sun was

setting I walked round the Quarry it was really delightful If M.r Morrison will allow me £50. next Winter I will engage to make the Quarry the prettiest place in the whole world.'[95] Indeed the quarry would become a small menagerie of sorts over the next few years, with rabbits, pheasants, pea hen, guinea pigs and curious ducks in a paddock there, as well as 'large White South American Geese' (Morrison was also offered a tame deer). The lake was equally resplendent with different breeds of duck, widgeons and swans. That year's end and the following represented the period of peak activity in the park:

> The Mud is out and a precious quantity there is __ we are making the Island above the bridge and making the Dam to rise the water at the upper end of the lake _
>
> The Gardener & Gilbert are planting out Evergreens, Hayter & Tine are filling up the Clumps in the Park with live Trees __
>
> Are the Standard Cherry & Damson Trees designed for the Garden, it will be useless to plant such kind of fruit any where besides on account of the Birds __[96]

The mud from the lake was used to cover 'over about 75 or 80 Acres of land', including 'a large piece of the enclosure which you [Morrison] designed for a Deer Park'.[97] Elsewhere, an orchard was established in the quarry, a new waterfall created north of the Pavilion (with 'new Islands at Fonthill Bishop'), and the old road through the park, which Morrison had earmarked for removal two years earlier, was now 'totally destroyed'.

Throughout Papworth's engagement, he habitually eyed sale-houses for suitable items for his client. At the auction of Coade in 1843,[98] Papworth picked out several items that he felt suitable for Morrison, of which Papworth suggested 'The Giant [Polyphemus] would certainly perform well over the Coverd way at the Landing Fonthill & the Acis & Galatea in the Cavern of the Rookery.'[99] (See Chapter 6 Figure 6.6.) The lot was duly purchased for 16 guineas, together with '40 Gothic Heads' that were evidently used to decorate the tunnel and grottoes at Fonthill.[100] Regrettably there was a falling out between Papworth and Morrison in 1845, and the architect died two years later.

## Conclusion

Alderman Beckford's contribution to Fonthill can now be established on firmer foundations, and works often attributed to his son returned to him with certitude. His Hermitage and subterraneous tunnel probably represent Joseph Lane's first commission, one that would evolve into the creation – with his son, Josiah – of the highly elaborate and wondrous grottoes that still delight us today. Yet the Alderman's making of the 'serpentine river', his extensive planting, and

the addition of various ornamental features also defined the eighteenth-century Fonthill Park. The Alderman died before his tower on Stop's Beacon could outdo that being erected at Stourhead (Alfred's Tower); his son would inherit those genes and ultimately build the most monumental of dwellings. But William Beckford also had other visions, and transformed the park further, bringing it closer to nature, making it his own, and casting off much of what his father had done. It is at Fonthill that we first see the change in Josiah Lane's style of grottoes – it would seem at his patron's behest – to rockwork-fashioned chambers, sparing in decoration; he would later apply this form to grottoes and other features at several other Wiltshire estates.

Beckford eventually removed himself from the trappings of his father's Splendens to the seclusion of Fonthill Abbey. For almost 30 years the Abbey outshone everything. But following its dramatic collapse in 1825, the accolade of magnificence was handed back to Stourhead. It was only under James Morrison's ownership that Fonthill, specifically the Old Park, was finally judged to have eclipsed its neighbour: 'some Gentlemen were here from London last week, and went from here to Stourhead, when they returned they told me that Stourhead was not worthy to be Compared to Fonthill'.[101]

# 7

# Dalliance and Duty: From the Perspective of William Thomas Beckford

Lawrence Klein

William Thomas Beckford (1760–1844) is a bewildering historical subject not just because of the actual complexities of his career. As many have recognised, the difficulty is that, over a long life, he left such extensive and stylish writings on himself, his inner life and his responses to all manner of things. Thus, it is easy to mine his writings for discrepancy and contradiction, but not so easy to characterise him unambiguously. As he admitted to his companion Gregorio Franchi, a lot of what he said and wrote was just 'words, words, words'.[1]

One telling instance of discrepancy, if not exactly contradiction, was his attitude toward his legacy. When he was young (1780), he wrote: 'I care not a grain of Millet whether my name be engraven on marble or graces the annals of a Kingdom, not I.'[2] As we will see, he often dismissed 'the World' and its estimation of him. Later, however, his attitude may have shifted. Joseph Farington, among his many comments on Beckford, reported in 1798 Beckford's intention, at Fonthill Abbey, for his *'own tomb* to be placed at the end of this Gallery, --- as having been an encourager of Art'.[3] 'Encourager of art' would have been an apt epitaph, 'engraven on marble'.

The main point of this essay is a fairly straightforward though neglected one: Beckford's encouragement of the arts was, among other things, a fulfilment of a certain aspect of aristocratic vocation. This is not to deny that his relationship with the idea of being an aristocrat was vexed.[4] Though a kind of populist in his politics, his father, Alderman Beckford, did envision his son acquiring a title. While embracing this vision, the son often defined his authentic inclinations against parental expectation. This aspect is summed up by the Beckford scholar, Boyd Alexander: 'There was a perpetual conflict in him between artistic dalliance and duty.' But what Alexander called 'artistic dalliance' could itself be a kind of 'duty', and that is what this essay explores.

## Aristocracy and ambition

During William Thomas Beckford's life, the dominance of the aristocracy was challenged and new claims were made on behalf of a social entity called 'the middle class'.[5] However, this period also saw a reconstruction and expansion of the British aristocracy, in which long-surviving families went from strength to strength and many new families joined them.[6] The aristocracy flourished in the long eighteenth century for many reasons. One was its active engagement and leadership – in politics, of course, but in many other aspects of economic, social and cultural life. The aristocracy was often allied with British modernity and progressiveness in the eighteenth century; it was not a slowly fossilising inheritance from a deep past. While many contemporaries thought the political nation should be more inclusive, few suggested that the aristocratic component of the constitution should be eliminated. Similarly there were strong arguments for maintaining a leading role for the aristocracy in society and culture.[7]

It is an irony perhaps that Beckford's failure to get a peerage occurred during a period when the opportunity to acquire one was rather better than it had been for a very long time. Late in life, Beckford wrote (though he did not publish) his *Liber Veritatis*, in which he targeted the large number of individuals and families who had been elevated – in his view, unjustifiedly – through the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It has to be said that the Beckford family trajectory was not so very different from that of many families mocked in *Liber Veritatis*.[8]

Over several generations, the Beckfords had amassed a mercantile fortune, based on their Jamaican plantations and trans-Atlantic trade.[9] The senior William Beckford, Alderman Beckford, was also the mouthpiece of populist politics, famous for the speech in which he asserted that the legitimacy of the polity was founded on 'the sense of the people'. However, even this speech seemed to acquiesce in the idea that, ideally, the nobility *is* the governing class.[10] Alderman Beckford's key political ally was the elder William Pitt, who had earned the sobriquet 'the Great Commoner' on account of his formidable role in the House of Commons; but Pitt was from an aristocratic family nested within a wide connection of leading aristocratic families, and he gained a peerage. The Alderman himself married into the aristocracy and clearly tried to steer his family on a path that would lead to a title.

The Alderman bequeathed this ambition to his son. Of course, that ambition was frustrated by the episode of 1784, when the younger Beckford's alleged sexual misbehaviour exploded into a public scandal which precluded the possibility of his ever being elevated.[11] This episode haunted Beckford, and he never dropped the prospect of achieving the 'rank' that he thought he deserved on the basis of ancestry, wealth and personal merit. He was obsessed with his own and others' genealogies.[12] More important, he went on, in many ways, to act the part of an aristocrat though he lacked a title.

At the same time, Beckford often refused to behave according to expectations. He recognised that his inclinations did not conform to many contemporary

norms. He could go so far as to eschew an interest in 'titles'.[13] His own words provide testimony for the tendency to see him as solitary, eccentric, Romantic and 'Gothic', leading an outsider's somewhat garish life. However, as David Watkin has emphasised, Beckford's aberrancy can be exaggerated, and it is important to normalise him by putting him in the context of other people like him. [14] This is not to deny all the things about him that were unusual and even unique; but in many ways his activities were within the register of aristocratic normalcy.

As a prospective grandee, Beckford was concerned from a young age by the question of 'mission'. He wrote in 1777 in Switzerland: 'I am filled with Futurity … What will be my Life? what misfortunes lurk in wait for me? what Glory?'[15] In 1781 he worried: 'I fear I shall never be …. good for anything in this world ...'[16] He projected such worries about his destiny into his fiction. Towards the end of *Vathek*, the hero (or anti-hero) is confronted by his 'good Genius' who tries, one final time, 'to divert him from pursuing his ruin'. Appearing as a shepherd, the good Genius asks: 'To whom Providence hath confided the care of innumerable subjects; is it thus that thou fulfillest thy mission?'[17]

## Dalliance and duty in conflict

It is obvious that Beckford experienced inner conflicts about how he should be leading his life. His remarks about these conflicts can create the impression that he was torn between the pursuit of his own desires and the fulfilment of his social responsibilities. As noted earlier, Boyd Alexander crystallised this as a choice between 'artistic dalliance and duty'. Many of Beckford's statements support this reading. He regularly talked of rejecting 'the World' for a more private life,[18] for 'my dreams, my phantasies and all of my singularity'.[19] He was very clear about his lack of a political vocation: 'Politics was not my mission,' he said.[20] He also frequently announced his hostility to polite society and its rituals. He revelled in being 'out of the way of courts and ceremonies, and common-place visitations, or salutations, or gossip ...'[21] He was determined not to be 'what your old Ladies call … "a charming Gentleman"'.[22] (In fact, he was quite good at being 'a charming Gentleman' when he chose.)

Once, he projected his inner conflicts in an imagined conversation with his step-sister Elizabeth Hervey. In this mental scenario, he envisioned himself discoursing on 'the splendour of the Chinese Palaces, the pomp of their processions and the grotesque wildness of their imaginations' until interrupted by Hervey who demanded that he desist 'in the name of Taste': '"For God's Sake, William, leave the contemplation of plates and dishes, what will people think if these are the objects that chiefly attract your attention?".'[23] In view of the political and social expectations of his parents (to which he partly wished to conform) he betrayed his anxiety.

His anxiety about not being what was expected pushed him to register slightingly his own true and powerful interests and passions. In 1781, he wrote 'I

fear I shall never be half so sapient nor good for anything in this world, but composing airs, building towers, forming gardens, collecting old Japan, and writing a journey to China or the moon'.[24] The tone of this remark is self-denigrating with a touch of self-congratulation: Beckford often struck this mixed register. However, in the end these 'frivolous' activities were the very ones about which he felt most strongly and which he pursued with intensity and business-like efficiency. Indeed, these activities constituted his 'mission', and such activities were not inimical to the status of aristocrat. Indeed, these were ways to fulfil an aristocratic vocation.

There were aristocratic models for the various activities which Beckford suggested made him not 'good for anything in this world'. For instance, Beckford talked of 'composing airs'. Willoughby Bertie, 4th Earl of Abingdon, was a musical aficionado who not only played the flute and supported the development of London concert life but also composed music. John Montagu, the 4th Earl of Sandwich, was another notable musical amateur, who loved to perform on his drums. These men sought fellow musicians of their own class, but they often had to conscript all manner of help to make possible a musical occasion, polite accomplishment temporarily trumping social distinction. [25]

Beckford also mentioned 'writing a journey to China or the moon'. Horace Walpole had produced his *Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors of England* (in 1758) precisely to underscore the aristocratic engagement with literary art. One of Beckford's godfathers was William Henry Lyttelton, a future Baron Lyttelton, who published his own verse late in life. This Lyttelton was the brother of George, Baron Lyttelton, who, if he did not write 'a journey to China or the moon', did write 'a journey into Wales' though he was better known for *Letters from a Persian in England to his Friend at Ispahan* (1735) and *Dialogues of the Dead* (first published in 1760).[26] Beckford also noted, in his list of frivolous activities, 'forming gardens'. Another godfather, William Pitt, the Earl of Chatham, had a life-long passion for landscape gardening and was known not just for enhancing the 'rural elegance' of his own properties but for advising others on how to configure theirs.[27]

There were obvious key differences between Beckford's endeavours in these artistic, or aesthetically informed, activities and those of other aristocrats. One difference is that most of these aristocrats engaged in such activities as a complement to activities of a political or at least public nature.[28] Beckford was disinclined to engage in public affairs. Indeed, after the scandal of 1784 he was informally barred from such activities (though he was the incumbent of a seat in Parliament for many years and, in the 1790s, he tried several unsuccessful diplomatic gambits).

The other difference is that these other aristocrats pursued their artistic or learned interests within webs of aristocratic and gentlemanly connection and sociability. Aesthetic and learned pursuits by aristocrats became public through involvement in institutions such as the Royal Society, the British Museum, and the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. The Earl of Sandwich parlayed his personal interest in making music into the Concert of

Ancient Music.[29] Even the Society of Dilettanti, which began as a hedonistic dining club for former Grand Tourists in the 1730s, reoriented itself toward the patronage of archaeology and the study of ancient art in the second half of the century.[30] By contrast, Beckford's engagement in the arts was shaped by his social ostracism. Outside webs of aristocratic connection, he had to go it alone. Thus, it is not surprising that, among the activities he had listed, 'building towers' became the central project of his life. Fonthill bespoke unambiguously the aristocratic claim.

Beckford's interest and engagement in the arts was not hostile to aristocratic norms. In practice, Beckford belonged to an aristocratic culture that condoned such aesthetic engagement. While in many ways a caste apart, aristocrats were also gentlemen, seeking to enjoy the prestige that politeness offered and submitting to its disciplines. In the eighteenth century, politeness referred not just to interpersonal manners but, more widely, to a programme of cultivation expressed, variably, in learning and aesthetic appreciation and even artistic engagement.[31] Beckford was not abnormal or frivolous for being interested in these matters. The degree to which aristocrats were supposed actually to practise the arts, as distinguished from encouraging them, was debated. The 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury had influentially distinguished the designing insight of the polite gentleman-aristocrat from the mechanic executing the work of art.[32] The 4th Earl of Chesterfield had famously criticised the Earl of Burlington for dirtying his hands in building activities, a criticism to which Beckford was liable.[33] However, as already indicated, other aristocrats participated actively in the arts, and the boundary between engagement and encouragement was not strictly maintained.

## Aristocracy as defender of a fragile liberty

Of course, fostering the arts was one component of a larger hierarchical regime, of which Beckford was a wholehearted supporter. Notwithstanding his own political dormancy, Beckford shared a commonplace conviction in the political importance of the aristocracy. Eighteenth-century Britons were always alert to the fragility of liberty and the threat of tyranny. From the seventeenth century, they had inherited the view that the main threat to liberty came from the monarch and his court. In this view, a strong and independent aristocracy was the only force powerful enough to serve as a brake on a corrupt monarch and his courtiers.[34]

Beckford's agreement with this outlook is confirmed by several pieces of evidence. For instance, he wrote that 'high-minded noblemen are never court favourites; the subject must not touch the hem of the royal robe'.[35] More specifically, a comment about the elder Pitt is indicative: 'Pitt [the younger] loved power; he was proud – but he had not the pride of his father, who, a courtier in manners and fond of power too, would not suffer the King to rob him of his self-respect.'[36] Most interesting is a characterisation of Don João de Castro (1500–48), who had retired to a *quinta*, visited by Beckford in 1787. Beckford dramatised the situation

of this Portuguese hero, writing that de Castro must have desired this retreat after the ungrateful behaviour of his countrymen. Beckford's de Castro had engaged in 'arduous' contests, 'a long and agonizing struggle, not only in the field under a burning sun, and in the face of peril and death, but in sustaining the glory and good fame of Portugal against court intrigues, and the vile cabals of envious, domestic enemies'. In his own time as in de Castro's, Beckford generalised, humanity was 'equally insensible to the warning voice of genuine patriotism, equally disposed to crouch under the rod of corrupt tyranny. And thus, by the neglect of wise and virtuous men, and a mean subserviency to knavish fools, eras which might become of gold, are transmuted by an accursed alchymy into iron rusted with blood.'[37]

On this matter, as in many others, Beckford was not of one mind. During his lifetime, the view got traction that the aristocracy, allied to the monarch and court, was a big part of the problem: as his father had laid it out, the sense of the people was a sound corrective to the corruption of an aristocracy allied to the royal court. Beckford had a streak of 'radicalism' or populism that derived from his father's politics and the traditions with which the Alderman was aligned. In 1796, Beckford published *Modern Novel Writing*, which showed signs of an anti-Establishment posture. It ended with an ironic appraisal of his critics' courage in defending 'the exclusive privileges of the FEW against the vulgar attacks of the MANY'. The second volume of the novel *Azemia* (1797) rebuked 'the idle and wasteful rich who live on their rents at the expense of the poor'. Thus, Beckford positioned himself as a critic of government in the name of the struggling rural poor and middling.[38]

Any affinity between Beckford and contemporary radicalism was limited by his support for slavery. He knew that his wealth derived from Jamaican plantations and, especially as he got older, that his resources were dependent on the price of sugar, the possibility of slave revolt and the political course of abolition, in which he admitted 'so principal a part of my fortune was at stake'. Though he used the language of 'blackness' to disparage Africans, he was not obviously a 'scientific racist'; African subjection could be justified on the basis of environmental and historical, rather than biological, differences. Thus, he seems to have believed that Africans were better off under white management in the Caribbean than they had been in Africa, exposed 'to the butcheries of their native tyrants'.[39]

Beckford definitely thought that there was a job for the heroic aristocrat in the defence of political and other values. This idea fed his belief in a society in which aristocrats were dominant. He embraced an organic and hierarchical view of society: he lamented the French aristocracy's loss of stature, and he admired Portuguese society, at least some of the time, because of the exalted position of people of rank. Indeed, Fonthill was periodically the scene for physical dramatisations of hierarchical society, ritual gatherings in which the different hierarchically arrayed facets of society were on display. These included his own coming-of-age party, his wife's funeral and, it seems, whenever Beckford himself returned after a long absence.[40]

His belief in the aristocracy's cohesive role also fed his local paternalism. When he was building the Abbey, he regularly justified the project as a contribution to the local economy: it put everybody to work. The moral economy of the country house was an idea shared by others.[41] It reflected an economic reality even if Beckford had additional motivations for building the Abbey. Clearly the strongest of those other motivations was the opportunity to realise in three dimensions the imperatives of his imagination. However, the realisation of those imperatives was not an abandonment of his aristocratic vocation but rather an opportunity to fulfil it. The aristocratic claim to leadership in the eighteenth century was manifested politically in the House of Lords and economically in the landed regime. Culturally, the aristocratic claim to leadership was made through both their own practice and their patronage, most conspicuously visible in their country houses.

During Beckford's life, as indicated earlier, people started saying that the 'middle class' was a particular receptacle of virtue. However, another current commonplace was that, whatever the faults of individual aristocrats, aristocrats were capable of a kind of heroic virtue of which the middling sorts were incapable. The middling sorts, it was said, were always limited by the necessity of making a living and by the narrowness of interest that accompanied that commitment. Thus, while the defence of liberty was the core responsibility of aristocracy, the defence of culture was another. Publicists of the middle and later eighteenth century dwelled much on the development of the fine and mechanical arts in Britain. In this project, they saw a definite role for the great. Thomas Martyn, for instance, declared that 'the polite arts are rising in Britain, and call for the fostering hand of the rich and powerful'. In particular, he wished 'that the nobility and gentry would condescend to make their cabinets and collections as accessible' as possible so that artisans and artists could develop a true taste.[42] Thomas Mortimer likewise sought to enhance 'a free intercourse between the artist and the patron'.[43] He educed the example of Charles Lennox, the Duke of Richmond, who, 'animated with an ardent desire to promote the improvement of polite Arts', had opened his collections to artisans and artists. So did Beckford.[44] The cultural role of the aristocracy was not articulated solely by such publicists. The 2nd Earl of Shelburne suggested that the middling were too self-absorbed to lead society and that aristocratic independence was best able to 'soften and liberalise' society and to foster the polishing of culture.[45]

In short, while the aristocratic class was subjected to critique in the later eighteenth century, this critique was answered by arguments that cast aristocrats as important contributors to progress and modernity.[46] Beckford was no fan of polite modernity. He looked elsewhere for inspiration. He was hostile to what he deemed 'the modern': bad taste, utilitarian thinking, egalitarianism. He valued 'the Gothic' (though he also perceived its limitations). However, his undertakings, especially the Fonthill project, did rest, among other things, on a notion of leadership in the arts of which aristocrats were uniquely capable.

Beckford believed that few men in contemporary Britain actually had true taste, and some critics denied Beckford himself that attribute.[47] Others interpreted

Beckford's achievement more sympathetically. Writing in 1801, after a visit to Fonthill, Benjamin West was 'lost in admiration' for 'the progress, which the combination of arts have made, directed by true taste'. When finished, West wrote, Fonthill will 'raise a climax of excellence without an example in the European world – and give an immortality to the man whose elegant mind has conceived so vast a combination of all that is refined in Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture'.[48] Here was an achievement of aristocratic heroism: art not as dalliance but as duty.

# 8

# ‘Impossible architecture’ at Fonthill: Imagination of Willian Beckford

Peter N. Lindfield and Dale Townshend

There is no doubt that, for those who visited it in its heyday, Fonthill Abbey in Wiltshire was the material realisation of the same architectural energies that William Beckford had brought to bear on *The History of the Caliph Vathek*, his Orientalist fiction that, though written in French in 1782, was translated into English by Samuel Henley and published without the author’s knowledge or consent as *An Arabian Tale, From an Unpublished Manuscript* in 1786. Though James Wyatt, the most renowned architect of his day, prepared the Abbey’s designs, it was Beckford who masterminded and oversaw the project, taking full control of it after Wyatt’s death in 1813.[1] Registering Beckford’s central role in the Abbey’s creation, the celebrated account in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* of the entertainments that Beckford had hosted at Fonthill for Lord Nelson, Lady Hamilton and others in late December 1800 implied a connection between his fictional and architectural projects by conjuring up a scene of lavish feasting, spectacle and sensory gratification that would not have been out of place at Vathek’s Palace of Alkoremi.[2] When John Britton retold this event in his *Graphical and Literary Illustrations of Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire* (1823), he made the links between Beckford’s fiction and his country house more explicit by claiming that it was on this occasion, in particular, that ‘the accomplished author of Vathek had determined to exemplify by practical illustration some of the theories of that original romance’.[3] Though Fonthill Abbey, Britton went on, possessed neither the five wings of the Palace of Alkoremi nor the five other palaces devoted specifically to the gratification of the senses, Beckford, in the manner of his sybaritic Caliph, had assembled within and around his mansion ‘the most delightful blandishments of art, the fascinations of talent, and the choicest luxuries of the palate: besides the most rare and delicious viands, fruits, and wines, with odiferous plants, flowers, and essences’.[4] These comments, of course, are a close paraphrase of the description of the first palace-like wing that Vathek adds to the Palace of Alkoremi in *Vathek*: its tables, we are

told, were 'continually covered with the most exquisite dainties; which were supplied both by night and by day, according to their constant consumption; while the most delicious wines and the choicest cordials flowed forth from a hundred fountains that were never exhausted'.[5] John Rutter followed suit in *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey* (1823), claiming that the staircase in the Great Tower at Fonthill was meant to give the illusion of the 'eleven hundred stairs' in Vathek's tower –although, in the first two French editions, the tower had a preposterous 15,000 stairs.[6] So inveterate was the assumption that Fonthill Abbey was the material manifestation of, or even physical paean to, Beckford's extraordinary architectural vision in *Vathek* that when Henry Venn Lansdown visited the ruins of the Abbey in October 1844, he could not help but see in the stony fragments potent reminders of Beckford's romance, the organ screen in the Octagon thus becoming one 'designed by "Vathek" himself', the Brown Parlour 'the very room' in which 'the magnificent "Vathek" ' frequently dined on 'every delicacy to tempt the palate'.[7]

In this chapter, we wish to subject the relation between *Vathek* and Fonthill Abbey, between Beckford's literary and actual architectural endeavours, to further scrutiny, in some senses complicating what nineteenth-century visitors and commentators simply took for granted, and in other respects confirming yet also qualifying their assumptions. For, unlike the seemingly straightforward (though, itself, by no means uncomplicated) relationship between Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill and *The Castle of Otranto* (1765), that which exists between Beckford's fiction and his house is characterised by a number of tensions and points of difference. First, while Beckford certainly seems to have exploited the connections between *Vathek* and Fonthill at times – and the lavish entertainments that he put on for Lord Nelson and his entourage in December 1800 seem to suggest as much – there remains evidence, both anecdotal and more empirical, that indicates that the relation between them was far more nuanced and complex for their creator than one of easy mirroring, semblance and equivalence.

Secondly, and unlike the Gothic architecture that links *The Castle of Otranto* to Strawberry Hill, *Vathek* and Fonthill Abbey do not, at first glance, appear to share a common style or form: while *Vathek*, though not without elements of the emergent Gothic-fictional mode, is a product of the Orientalist tradition in eighteenth-century fiction, the Abbey's façade was uniformly Gothic in design, and its interiors, such as the grand drawing room (Figure 16.1), a mixture of Gothic and largely Classical spaces.[8] Thus, while the Gothic style of Fonthill deliberately courted associations with Britain's Catholic past, the architecture in *Vathek* – though its style, Beckford insists, cannot be precisely named and identified – is strongly Islamic and Oriental in spirit.

Thirdly, while *Otranto* was written when the construction of Strawberry Hill had for the most part been completed, *Vathek* predates the creation of

**Fig. 16.1** Stedman Whitwell, *The Grand Drawing Room* [at Fonthill Abbey]. Plate 5 from John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey*, 1823.
Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

Fonthill by just over a decade: though it was planned from as early as 1790, Beckford's Gothic pile was built between the years 1796 and 1817.[9] Separated by the differences in style, temporality and those imposed by Beckford himself, *Vathek* and Fonthill Abbey do not readily lend themselves to the type of analysis that W. S. Lewis undertook in his seminal article 'The Genesis of Strawberry Hill' (1934), that is, the identification of the return of 'real' architectural features of the writer's house in the fictional text that it was thought to have inspired.[10] If anything, Beckford's fiction seemed to have inspired his home. As we argue in this chapter, though, it is through a consideration of what we term William Beckford's 'architectural imagination' – an underlying discursive construct that runs from his earliest manuscripts, published works and architectural endeavours through to his later projects, writings and recorded impressions – that some of these difficulties might be resolved or at least further explained. It is nothing new to say that Beckford's architectural endeavours were firmly grounded in the terms of biographical experience, a point to which critics have repeatedly returned, and to which some of our observations below attest. The novelty of our argument, however, lies in its articulation and analysis of Beckford's 'architectural imagination', a broader imaginative 'complex' that informed both his literary and his architectural works, and a rich, generative faculty of which he himself was self-consciously aware.

## Fonthill's tower and the Tower of the Caliph

When an enthusiastic Cyrus Redding made his first acquaintance with the aged Beckford, now residing at Lansdown Crescent, Bath, in 1835, the sight of the writer's tower on Lansdown Hill (Figure 16.2) prompted him to make what must to both parties have seemed a rather predictable observation: 'while I was on Lansdown', he remarks, 'I thought of the Tower of the Caliph'; 'the towers in "Vathek," at Fonthill, and here', he continues, 'lead to such a conclusion'.[11] Beckford's reported response, however, swiftly undercuts Redding's assumption that the towers of Lansdown and Fonthill were homages to the tower of the Caliph in *Vathek* with a frank disclaimer:

> 'No,' he replied, 'I have extraordinary sight; God rarely gives men such eyes. I am partial to glancing over a wide horizon – it delights me to sweep far along an extended landscape. I must elevate myself to do this, even at Lansdown.

**Fig. 16.2** Lansdown Tower, Bath.

Beckford's Tower & Museum.

> The tower at Fonthill was as necessary an appendage to such a structure as it would have been to a real abbey.'[12]

A structure determined by his love of landscape-viewing and a 'necessary appendage' to the Gothic style in which Wyatt had designed and built, the tower at Fonthill bore no relation, Beckford claimed, to the Caliph's in *Vathek* beyond the most obvious and superficial of parallels. A sketch (Figure 16.3) that Beckford himself produced of Vathek's tower in the presence of Mr. John T. C. Heaviside in 1843 rather underlines this point.[13] The grand and muscularly tapered tower in Beckford's sketch is governed by Classical forms: the lower section resembles a triumphal arch, the central register is framed by pilasters and the upper tier is encircled with

**Fig. 16.3** William Beckford, *Vathek's Tower, Drawn aged 83*, 1843.
Collection of Philip Hewat-Jaboor.

**Fig. 16.4** J. Martin, *View of the South Front* [of Fonthill Abbey] *from the Lawn Grand Drawing Room*. Plate 12 from John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey*, 1823.

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

round-headed arcading. Although Fonthill's tower (Figure 16.4) is superficially similar in that it tapers upwards in sections, its ornament is firmly Gothic: lancet windows, blind arcading and pierced crenellations resembling a corona. Standing corrected, Redding defensively replied to Beckford with the comment that '"The Tower of the Caliph is so prominent in 'Vathek' that I am not the only person who labours under the mistake"'.[14] Indeed, he was not alone in these assumptions, but when another anonymous correspondent in the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1844 published his recollections of his conversations with Beckford in 1837, he recalled the latter expressing similar sentiments. When asked whether his establishment at Fonthill was really as large as it was reported to be, Beckford vigorously replied with the expostulation '"Enormous!"' – before hastily adding the caveat that, despite the building's Alkoremi-like scale, '"it did not realise the reports which were current as to the magnificence of my mode of living; for instance, I never sat down alone to forty dishes"'.[15] By Beckford's own admission here, he was not the Caliph of Fonthill that he was often taken to be, nor did he reside at Fonthill Abbey in a state of luxurious self-indulgence anywhere approaching that of his best-known fictional character.

## 'The Transport of Pleasure'

While Beckford thus often tended to deny the somewhat superficial and commonplace connections between house and fiction that his contemporaries routinely

made, Fonthill and the architecture of *Vathek* are nonetheless indubitably linked by the deeper and more abiding terms of Beckford's architectural imagination, the precise contours of which were already taking shape in his juvenilia of the late 1770s. In the early 'The Transport of Pleasure' manuscript (ca. 1777–8), for instance, a 17-year-old Beckford described to his tutor, the artist Alexander Cozens, a rich and poignant vision of idealised existence within imaginary architectural space, one that would still be very much in place in Beckford's work over five decades later.[16] Part boyish escapism and part romantic and erotic reverie, the piece described the fantasy of Beckford's and Cozens's retreat from society into an intensely private world of sensual stimulation and intellectual companionship. Ensconced in a high tower built on a hill, the two pass their days in an endless round of eating and drinking, reading and writing, philosophising and star-gazing, Beckford thus spinning a homoerotic or at least queer fantasy that would be realised to greater effect in *Vathek*.[17] Not insignificantly, the imaginary tower in which Beckford and Cozens in this piece dwell is Gothic in design and furnishing, its painted windows 'crowded with gorgeous figures coloured in antient tomes' and lit by the lights of many tapers. One hundred steps within it lead up into 'a spacious hall wainscoted with cedar', while its arched roof is said to be 'strangely sculptured with gothic devices'. A Gothic tower containing censors, tapestries, rich chalices, softly-muted choirs, large flower-filled porcelain vases, mosaic-covered statues of knights, sovereigns and saints, and a capacious gallery enclosed with gilt lattice work: it is hardly surprising that Boyd Alexander was led to entitle this manuscript as 'Fonthill Foreshadowed' in his influential study *England's Wealthiest Son* of 1962.[18]

Yet, more than a 'prophecy' of the work that Beckford would undertake at Fonthill Abbey some 20 years later, the fantasy set out here is better thought of as an early expression of what we are calling Beckford's 'architectural imagination', a nexus of imaginative architectural elements, behaviours and luxurious sensations that would come to shape and determine much of his subsequent literary and architectural undertakings. As realised here, the coordinates of Beckford's architectural imagination involve the fantasy of withdrawal into a timeless and intensely private architectural space, one in which two individuals who are somewhat illicitly or transgressively linked with one another – here, the jejune student and his older male tutor – indulge in a lavish lifestyle of sensory delight and intellectual pleasure. Beckford's architectural imagination is nothing if not literary, for, in addition to its sense of the 'literary trance' in which Beckford and Cozens exist at the tower, 'The Transport of Pleasure' is shot through with literary allusion to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and the tale of Locman, the sage of the enchanted labyrinth of flowers that features in Marianne-Agnès Pillement, dame de Fauques's Oriental fiction, *The Vizirs; or, The Enchanted Labyrinth* (1774). Beyond this, the space depicted looks also to the Bower of Bliss in Book II of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, and, through Spenser, to the enchanted castles in the epic romances of Tasso and Ariosto: Beckford's architectural imagination is nourished and nurtured on some of the major texts of the British and European canon.

The most significant implication that this early work bears for an understanding of the relationship between *Vathek* and Fonthill Abbey is that, just as it draws simultaneously from fictions in both the Oriental and English or 'Gothic' traditions, so it refuses to impose a distinction between Gothic and Oriental styles of architecture: adjacent to the Gothic tower on the hill stands a suite of Oriental apartments, opulently furnished with Chinese and Japanese effects, and clearly taking their cue from Beckford's erstwhile architectural tutor William Chambers's evocative descriptions of the Halls of the Moon in *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772). Opulently furnished with jewels, marble, ivory, porcelain, mother of pearl, silver and gold, these are the structures to which Chinese princes are said to retire, a place where, like Cozens and Beckford in the early fantasy, they feast 'and give a loose to every sort of voluptuous pleasure'.[19] The Gothic cedes effortlessly to Orientalism in 'The Transport of Pleasure' as if there were no substantial difference between them. Herein, then, lies a key feature of Beckford's architectural imagination: as drawn to Orientalism as it is to the Gothic, it makes no firm distinction between them.

## Traditions with Oriental roots

In this regard, Beckford was, for once, thoroughly in step with many of the architectural historians and practitioners of his day. Sir Christopher Wren's memoirs that were published as *Parentalia* in 1750 had advanced the influential (though by no means uncontested) theory that Gothic architecture had derived originally from the east. Thus, he claimed, 'what we now vulgarly call the *Gothick,* ought properly and truly be named the *Saracenick Architecture refined by the Christians*; which first of all began in the East after the Fall of the *Greek* Empire by the prodigious Success of those People that adhered to *Mahomet's* Doctrine'.[20] This soon influenced Georgian architectural and interior design, and during the 1750s Gothic and Chinoiserie were often either grouped together as alternatives to the prevailing taste for Classicism or combined as hybrids in contemporary interior fashions. Plates in Thomas Chippendale's influential furniture pattern-book *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* (1754), for instance, present combinations of Chinese and Gothic motifs in single designs such as Plates XXI–XXI *Gothick Chairs*; XXIII–XXV *Chinese Chairs*; and CXI *China Case* (Figure 16.5).

Similarly, William and John Halfpenny in their *Chinese and Gothic Architecture Properly Ornamented* (1752) brought together the two aesthetics, unifying them as legitimate though still marginally inferior alternatives to Classicism.[21] Underscoring the styles' similarities, their Gothic and Chinoiserie designs are very similar in form, ornament and disposition; both were fashionably exotic, and in their flowing and asymmetric forms, they were mutually in keeping with late eighteenth-century Rococo. In the light of these and other examples, it would appear that Beckford's Gothic Abbey at Fonthill was not as stylistically remote from the self-consciously

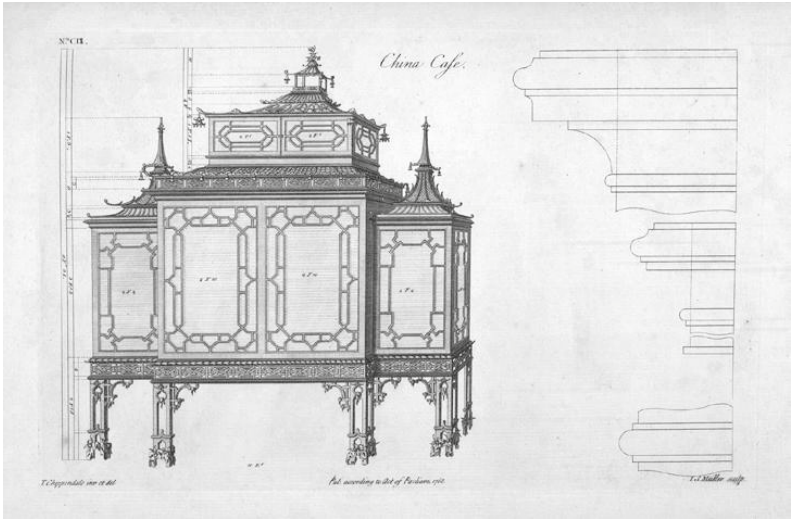



**Fig. 16.5** Thomas Chippendale, *China Case.* Plate CIX from Chippendale, *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* (1753).



Persian and Arabian tone and setting of *Vathek* as it first seems.[22] A visual reconciliation of the two styles was depicted in a watercolour of the Hall of Eblis by Jackson (Figure 16.6) that is now held at the Lewis Walpole Library, Connecticut.[23] Successfully realising the space's cavernous qualities, the artist has also made an important and revealing architectural choice: swollen Egyptian columns (loosely of the Papyriform type) support overtly Gothic vaulting. This drawing, though surely not authorised or even known by Beckford, certainly provides insight into his architectural imagination, explaining, as it does, a reader's response to the apparent disjunction between the Gothic architecture of Fonthill and the Oriental forms and structures of *Vathek*.

It was not only Gothic architecture that eighteenth-century cultural commentators held to have originated in the east. In the first volume of *The History of English Poetry* (1774), Thomas Warton advanced the claim that literary romance too, the formal vehicle of Beckford's imagination in *Vathek*, originated with the Arabians and Saracens on the northern coast of Africa. Transported at the beginning of the eighth century into Spain, this 'extravagant' and highly imaginative literary form, Warton argues, eventually spread throughout Europe and into Britain; western contact with the east during the Crusades only further ensured its dissemination. Though Warton's views were not shared by all – Thomas Percy, for one, had earlier claimed in his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) that the romance form was originally of European or 'Gothic' extraction – they were sufficiently current for Beckford tacitly to rely upon them in his composition of *Vathek* in early 1782. As Henley's scholarly notes to the unauthorised translation of the text made clear, the enchanted architecture of the tale looked not to Gothic antecedents so much

**Fig. 16.6** Jackson, *Hall of Eblis* from *Vathek*. N.D. Babb-Beckford no. 101.
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

as to the Oriental magic and wonder of *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*. Horace Walpole, in turn, perceived startling continuities between the eastern tradition of Romance and Gothic architecture: 'the *Arabian Nights* and King's [College] Chapel [Cambridge]', he wrote in 1789, are cognate with one another insofar as both are 'above all rules', the orders, symmetries and mathematical principles of classical literature and architecture.[24] It was precisely these presumed continuities between the imagination, romance and non-classical architectural styles that led John Britton to remark that one with so 'vivid' a fancy as William Beckford could not but choose to commission and oversee at Fonthill work in the Gothic mode: incapable of being satisfied 'with any thing of commonplace or even usual character', a mind such as Beckford's required 'novelty, grandeur, complexity and even sublimity; and it may be safely asserted, that no style or class of architecture is so well adapted to effect these purposes as the gothic, or ecclesiastical'.[25]

Certainly, a sense of imaginative and fanciful 'rulelessness' (in the sense of being entirely 'without rules' rather than infringing or violating pre-existing ones) applies to the architecture of *Vathek* particularly well. Its architectural highlights – the Palace of Alkoremi and the Hall of Eblis – are said to be unclassifiable according to established architectural criteria, orders and traditions.[26] Though Sandro Jung has argued that the novel's architecture is recognisably Gothic in style, Beckford, when sketching out the surfaces of the Hall of Eblis, is insistent upon the fact that this is 'of an architecture unknown in the records of the earth'.[27] This important comment economically repeats the description of the extraordinary, fantastical architecture that the narrator William encounters at the centre of the earth in 'The

Long Story' or *The Vision* (ca. 1777), another early, florid architectural fantasy that Beckford addressed to Alexander Cozens. Part natural wonder and part constructed architectural fantasy, the Halls of the Glorious in this story are described as being 'divided by at least three thousand massy Columns into the most stately Halls decorated with Colonades [sic] of slender pillars inconceivably striking'.[28] Though these references to pillars and colonnades in *The Vision* are couched in the language of Classicism, we are subsequently told that they 'supported neither frieze nor Cornice, nor any ornament in the least degree consistent with the rules of Architecture we observe on the surface of the Earth, but sustained on their airy Capitals a variety of glistening Garlands composed of Sparrs and intermixed like the branches which form our Bowers'.[29] Similar references to otherworldly orders of architecture that are yet to be conceived, identified and named as such run throughout the *Episodes of Vathek*.[30] Perpetually fascinated by fantastical natural, supernatural and manmade forms, Beckford's architectural imagination, like the *capriccio* tradition with which it was contemporary, is characterised by an interest in 'impossible' architectural structures that have no existence beyond the realm of fantasy.

## 'Impossible architecture' at Fonthill

As William North's prefatory 'Memoir' to his 1819 edition of *Vathek* observed, 'Much of the description of Vathek's palace, and even the renowned "Hall of Eblis," was afterwards visibly embodied in the real Fonthill Abbey, of which wonders, almost as fabulous, were at one time reported and believed.'[31] Though Beckford, as we have argued, was known on occasion to dispute this, the assumption that Fonthill Abbey was, in some senses, the realisation of the architectural visions of *Vathek* was one that was shared by Rutter, Britton and numerous other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century visitors to the house. Although modern and contemporary Beckford scholarship has frequently rehearsed a similar claim, it nonetheless remains one that is worth exploring in greater depth. Despite Beckford's caveats, *Vathek*'s buildings and their architectural effects do, indeed, seem to offer numerous templates for Fonthill's exterior and interior, and a number of important themes expressed by the novel's architectural fabrics were subsequently realised by Beckford and Wyatt at the Abbey. Of these, architectural grandeur and sublimity – especially as expressed through scale – and the importance of collections and their display are the most important, and are also two elements that are introduced in *Vathek* at the outset of the narrative. Seeking substantially to augment the 'scanty' structure that his father Motassem had erected on the hill of Pied Horses, Vathek adopts as his primary architectural project at the Palace the construction of a tower, a building that, though it was conceived as an imitation of the Biblical Nimrod's building of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9), the Caliph erects 'not, like that great warrior, to escape being drowned, but from the insolent curiosity of penetrating the secrets of heaven'.[32] As

critics have long pointed out, this reflects Beckford's life-long interest in towers, one that was expressed in 'The Transport of Pleasure' and which culminated in the building of Lansdown Tower, Bath, to Henry Goodridge's designs between 1825 and 1827.[33] The sheer grandeur, scale and the dwarfing of human inhabitants by imposing architectural forms that we see in *Vathek* seem to derive from Beckford's fascination with Giovanni Battista Piranesi's illustrations (Figure 16.7), an interest, it has been postulated, that was ignited by his father's large collection of the Italian's prints.[34] The influence of Piranesi on Beckford's architectural imagination is certainly evident in his printed but suppressed *Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents* (1783), the travelogue in which Beckford imaginatively adorns the blank German landscape with castles 'in the style of Piranesi',[35] and then later, before the Doge's Palace in Venice, imaginatively visualises and then draws 'chasms and subterraneous hollows, the domain of fear and torture, with chains, rocks, wheels, and dreadful engines, in the style of Piranesi'.[36] Similar Piranesi-inspired scenes of lofty and subterraneous architectural space recur in *Vathek*, though augmented here by eighteenth-century accounts of the sublime effects of grand and imposing architecture in writers such as John Dennis.

At Fonthill Abbey, sublime architectural grandeur was conveyed by its size. It was conceived on the scale of an exceptionally endowed monastery (such as the nearby Glastonbury), and intended to reflect Beckford's vast sugar-derived wealth that, at least initially, ensured him a handsome income. Although Beckford claimed that it had cost him £273,000 to realise, Fonthill is thought to have cost the substantially larger amount of £400,000, and has fittingly been styled by one modern critic as the work of a megalomaniac wishing to secure immortality for himself.[37] There is a striking connection, here, between Beckford's unbridled architectural imagination in *Vathek* and that realised in Wiltshire. By 1790, Beckford's thoughts about how to spend his income had settled firmly upon architecture. His announcement that 'I am growing rich, and mean to build Towers, and sing hymns to the powers of Heaven on their summits' resonates uncannily with the 'insolent curiosity' of the Caliph at the tower of Alkoremi to 'extort from the stars the decrees of his destiny'.[38] Wyatt's preliminary sketches for Fonthill (see Chapter 4, Figures 4.15 and 4.16) clearly illustrate, in turn, this ambition, and demonstrate the tower's centrality to, and dominance over, the remainder of the already palatial Abbey.[39] In Beckford's novel as in his house, towers are the architectural manifestations of hubris and overreaching ambition, characteristics that his architectural imagination simultaneously celebrates and censures.

The design of Fonthill changed considerably over the following years: with the dismantling of Fonthill Spendens between 1801 and 1807, the Abbey was to become Beckford's principal residence.[40] Wyatt cautioned against this, saying that 'much blame would be thrown on him as the adviser', to which Beckford replied, 'You are older than I am, yet I have lived long enough not to mind what the world says.'[41] The Abbey's designs became increasingly ambitious and extensive in response to a new-found need for accommodation. Once again, the parallels

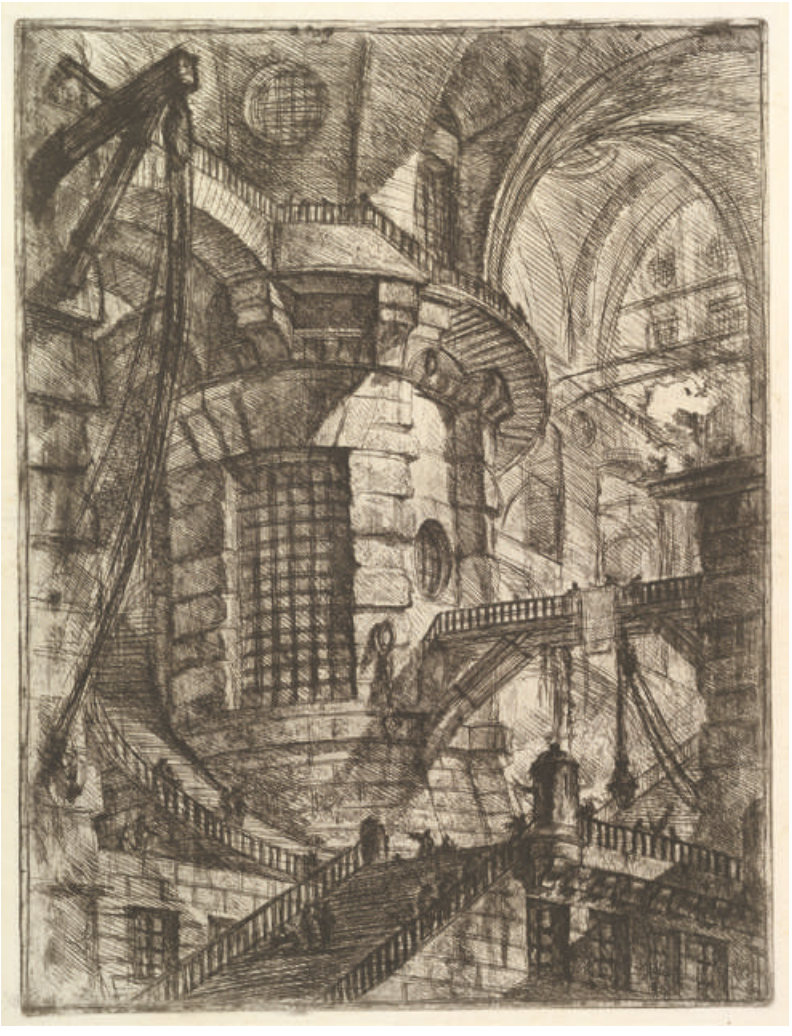


**Fig. 16.7** Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *The Round Tower, from 'Carceri d'invenzione',* ca. 1749–50.



with *Vathek* are patent: like Vathek, who extends and redevelops the Palace that he inherits from his father, Beckford at Fonthill wished to expand, exceed and improve upon the scale and ostentation of his inherited Palladian pile. Like Beckford and Vathek, Walpole's work at Strawberry Hill had been driven by similar aims; its Gothic Revivalist architecture was to a large extent motivated by the desire to exceed paternal architectural example. Wyatt's proposal for the expanded Abbey, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1798, depicts Fonthill with a Salisbury Cathedral-like projection and spire towering over the expansive north and south

wings, a structure that quite literally reaches up to the heavens.[42] A further extended proposal, this time with a 300-foot spire,[43] demonstrates the sheer insatiability of Beckford's architectural ambition, the ambition hinted at in his letter from 1790 and registered in Wyatt's reservations concerning his ability to satisfy it.[44] For Beckford, Vathek's folly in erecting such a tower, and his subsequent consignment to a lifetime of perpetual yearning in Eblis's hell-like depths, did not serve as sufficient warning about the dangers of over-reaching. Here too, it would seem, Beckford regarded his novel and his home as discrete, rather separate entities. Almost certainly, he could not emphasise the continuities between the two without heaping upon himself the damnation and suffering meted out to the Caliph at the narrative's end.

Nevertheless, misfortune did, indeed, strike Fonthill when, in May 1800, the crossing-tower collapsed. Undaunted, the ever-opportunistic Beckford seized upon the catastrophe as the occasion to create an even more ambitious residence: 'We shall rise again more glorious than ever', he wrote to Sir Isaac Heard on 21 May 1800, 'provided the sublime Wyatt will graciously design to bestow a little more commonplace attention upon what is supposed to be his favourite Structure'.[45] 'The Crash and the Loss', he insouciantly continued, 'sound magnificently in the Newspaper, I neither heard the one nor feel the other.'[46] In December of the same year, Beckford hosted the famous party for Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton, by all accounts a sumptuous and extravagant event that prompted reporters and commentators to compare Fonthill Abbey to the Caliph's splendid Palace of Alkoremi. To Beckford's dissatisfaction, however, the house remained incomplete one year later. Urged into action by the frustrated client, Wyatt is reported as wishing to assure Beckford that he would 'do all in his power to forward the work at the Abbey so as to make them ready by the spring', promising to be at Fonthill 'by the end of this Month [December 1802] to see how all goes on & to settle any things that may be wanted'.[47] Progress was eventually forthcoming, and Wyatt created a suite of extravagant Gothic parade rooms on Fonthill's *piano nobile*. Of these rooms, the most impressive were the Abbey's north and south arms, King Edward's Gallery (see Chapter 4 Figure 4.19) and St Michael's Gallery (see Chapter 4 Figure 4.17) respectively. Since the space was so vast that it could not be heated, Fonthill's western limb, the cavernous Great Hall in which Nelson and Lady Hamilton were entertained, was later converted into the state entrance.[48] That the Abbey's proportions and decorative wealth had ironically become, in effect, a realisation of the Caliph's Palace in *Vathek* did not escape the shrewd John Rutter in 1823: 'The lofty tower now distinguishes the centre of an immense line of other towers and curtains', he wrote, 'stretching to the north and south, plainly indicating how much we have yet to explore the interior'; 'As we pass the threshold, the height of the archways, and the dimensions of the doors, are felt with surprise.'[49] Fonthill, it was clear, was as vast and sublime a spectacle as that described in the pages of Beckford's romance, but it was the underlying work of Beckford's architectural imagination that drew the two together.

The parallels between these two different but related expressions of Beckford's creativity do not end here: the Abbey, as William North's observation of 1819 made clear, also demonstrated notable similarities with the Hall of Eblis in *Vathek*. Eblis's watch towers, the narrator notes, 'ranged before the ruins of an immense palace, whose walls were embossed with various figures';[50] as the moon dilates on 'a vast platform', so it reveals 'the shades of the lofty columns which reached from the terrace almost to the clouds'.[51] Early designs for Fonthill mirrored and repeated this mass of attenuated, ever-receding towers: as Rutter observes, 'designs were ordered to be prepared for a grand range of towers, to run direct eastwards from the Lancaster Tower; another and another succeeded each, and were successively demolished, until finally they shrunk into the small, but internally beautiful adjuncts of the Sanctuary and Oratory'.[52] More acutely, when Vathek descends into the subterranean Hall of Eblis, he is struck by the 'grandeur of the surrounding objects' that 'extended their view to those at a distance', discovering in the gloom 'rows of columns and arcades, which gradually diminished, till they terminated in a point radiant as the sun, when he darts his last beams athwart the ocean'.[53] Although Beckford's Abbey lacks the columnar architecture described here – its lengthy arms, St Michael's and King Edward's Galleries, are Gothic rather than Classical in design – the prospect from Fonthill's central crossing (or Octagon) along St Michael's Gallery nevertheless simulates the effect described in the novel, particularly given that the gallery terminated with a sun-like oriel window designed to admit more light. Some impression of this effect can be gauged in the plate in Rutter's *Delineations* that depicts the view from the south end of St Michael's Gallery towards the Crossing and King Edward's Gallery (Figure 16.8).

## The party at Fonthill Splendens

By Beckford's own admission, and as scholars have long pointed out, the Hall of Eblis sections in *Vathek* were directly inspired by a Christmas and coming-of-age party that he hosted at Fonthill Splendens in late 1781. The manuscript sources of this information are worth returning to, revealing, as they do, not only what has often been taken to be the fiction's primary point of architectural origin, but also the extent to which Beckford framed this event, both at the time and later on in his life, as the acute realisation of that particular nexus of space, intimacy, transgressive desire and sensory pleasure that, as we have argued, comprise the foundational terms of his architectural imagination. Having turned 21 only the month before, Beckford in a letter of 19 November 1781 to Louisa Pitt-Rivers enthusiastically discussed the preparations that Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg had been making for the staging of 'a mysterious something' at Splendens, 'a mysterious something', the letter continues, that, in the artist's 'own unhallowed words', 'eye has not yet seen or hearts of man conceived'.[54] Looking back on the event in a subsequent letter to Louisa in March 1782, Beckford, while urging his

**Fig. 16.8** W. Finley, *Interior of St Michael's Gallery* [at Fonthill Abbey], *Looking Across the Octagon into the King Edward's Gallery.* Plate 7 from John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey*, 1823.

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

correspondent to take no heed of the malicious rumours that transpired in its wake, made nostalgic reference to 'our orientalisms last December at Fonthill', recalling fondly 'those more fortunate retired hours' that the two passed 'immured in the Turkish chamber – when joy thrilled in every vein and every glance we cast

on the vaulted cieling [sic], glowing with saffron light, reminded us of the subterranean retreat of the princess of the Isle of Ebony in the tale of the 3 Calenders'.[55]

In these letters of late 1781 and early 1782, then, we see a reiteration of the same fantasy that Beckford had expressed in 'The Transport of Pleasure' manuscript some four years earlier: the withdrawal of two illicitly connected individuals into a richly appointed architectural space, indulging there in the celebration of sensory and intellectual pleasure. Though not the queer romance of Beckford and Cozens his tutor, this retreat is equally transgressive and clandestine, for Louisa Pitt-Rivers was Beckford's senior by several years and the wife of his cousin, Sir Peter Beckford. The scandal surrounding the episode would subsequently play a role in ushering Beckford into a more respectable marriage with Lady Margaret Gordon in May 1783. Added to this scenario in the letters is Beckford's persistent fascination with impossible architectural forms, with structures that, as in *The Vision* and *Vathek*, have yet to be conceived and seen on earth: doors lead to passages, and passages to other passages, eventually combining into a fantastical architectural space that is impossible to fathom. As in 'The Transport of Pleasure', the scene, with its references to the Isle of Ebony and the three Calenders, is also couched in literary reference, a conflation of two separate stories from *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*.

When, on 9 December 1838 (approximately 57 years later), the aged Beckford added a lengthy manuscript note to these letters to Louisa, his memories assumed even greater fanciful proportions. 'Immured we were "au pied de la letter" [literally] for three days following', he recalls, 'doors & windows so strictly closed that neither common day light [sic] nor commonplace visitors could get in or even peep in.'[56] '[T]he solid Egyptian hall', the note continues, 'looked as if hewn out of a living rock, the line of apartments of apparently endless passages extending from it – on either side – were all vaulted – an interminable stair case [sic], which when you looked down it appeared as deep as the well in the pyramid – & when you looked up was lost in vapour, led to suites of stately apartments gleaming with marble pavements – as polished as glass.'[57] '[N]o wonder', Beckford writes, 'such scenery inspired the descriptions of the halls of Eblis – I composed Vathek immediately upon my return to town thoroughly embued [sic] with all that passed at Fonthill during this voluptuous festival.'[58]

A celebration of youth, beauty and the delights of all the five senses in an impossible, Piranesi-like architectural space: there is nothing quantifiably different in Beckford's memories of the festivities of December 1781 from the fantasies that he had expressed in 'The Transport of Pleasure' and, indeed, in *Vathek*. While his depiction of the Hall of Eblis in the novel certainly attests to just how formative this party at Fonthill Splendens was, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that it was simply the actualisation of the constitutive terms of Beckford's deeper, more pervasive imaginative architectural 'complex'. If not, the letters of 1781–2 and the note of 1838 certainly framed it as such.

Beckford intimated as much in that revealing conversation that he had with Cyrus Redding upon the occasion of their first meeting at Lansdown Tower in 1835. 'Old Fonthill', Beckford noted, 'had a very ample, lofty, loud echoing

hall, one of the largest in the kingdom. Numerous doors led from it into different parts of the house, through dim, winding passages.'[59] While this certainly informed his writing of the closing sections of *Vathek*, the Hall of Eblis, he now claims, had been largely 'generated' by his own creative faculty, his imagination 'magnifying' and 'colouring' the Palladian spaces of the father's home with the 'Eastern character' with which the son had long been enamoured. In Redding's account, the Christmas party of 1781 is merely the catalyst to a much more generative process of imaginative engagement. Finally figured here as the 'impulse' of his 'own mind', *Vathek* is one manifestation of Beckford's extraordinary architectural imagination, an expression of the same creative energy with which he approached the design and construction of Fonthill Abbey, the same singular and vital principle that drove and informed Beckford's life and work from the earliest to the latest of days.

# 9

# Works of Art and Collections

Martin P. Levy

Of all the collections associated with buildings on the Fonthill estate in Wiltshire, it is the one created by William Beckford at James Wyatt's Fonthill Abbey[1] that, for its range and originality, remains the most famous. However, before him, Beckford's father, Alderman Beckford, had furnished his new Fonthill House – often referred to as Fonthill 'Splendens' – in great style.[2] Later, James Morrison and his son Alfred were to lavish huge attention on the surviving Pavilion of 'Splendens', between 1832 and Alfred's death; it was demolished in 1921.

## Sources for the Fonthill collections

The Beckford collections, particularly William's, have long attracted scholarly attention, culminating in the exhibition *William Beckford: An Eye for the Magnificent* (2001–2).[3] Studies of the Morrisons' collections, by contrast, remain in their relative infancy. Recently however, in *A Genius for Money: Business, Art and the Morrisons* (2011),[4] Caroline Dakers has drawn into focus the major collection of paintings and other works of art formed by James Morrison, while also adding a significant chapter on the exceptional and hitherto underappreciated collecting and patronage of his son Alfred.[5]

Although the works of art commissioned or bought for the various properties at Fonthill have been widely dispersed, sufficient documentary evidence survives to identify elements of these accumulations where they have now settled, and also to allow rediscovery when they surface on the art market. For recognising works from William Beckford's collections, key sources include John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey* (1823), and Edmund English and Willes Maddox, *Views of Lansdown* Tower (1844). Also essential for any investigation are such auction catalogues as Christie's, *Magnificent Effects of Fonthill* Abbey (1822, a sale that was cancelled); Phillips, *The Unique and Splendid Effects*…, 1823; and English and Fasana,

*Catalogue of the Splendid Furniture, Cabinets, Paintings…the Property of the late William Beckford, Esquire* (1845). Beckford's daughter Susan Euphemia, Duchess of Hamilton, inherited the collections from her father, and there is considerable evidence about the movement of works from Bath to Hamilton Palace and to other Hamilton properties in London and elsewhere in England that can be found in the Hamilton Archive.[6] Many of these Beckford pieces can be identified in Christie's catalogue of the Hamilton Palace sale in 1882, and the subsequent post-sale publication *Hamilton Palace Collection Illustrated Priced Catalogue,* also of 1882. A comprehensive bibliography of the massive contemporary and later literature documenting Beckford's collections is given in the 2001–2 exhibition catalogue. [7]

Beyond archival and later printed and photographic sources, there are often physical identifying clues offered by decoration incorporating elements of Beckford's armorial bearings (Figure 17.1), which he frequently incorporated into work he commissioned, for example the Cinquefoil and the Latimer Cross**.**

For the Morrisons, the extensive Fonthill Estate Archives (private collection) are only now beginning to throw up their riches. And while Alfred Morrison

**Fig. 17.1** Candlestick (detail), gilt bronze, English, ca. 1800. The manufacture attributed to Benjamin Lewis Vulliamy (1780–1845).

Courtesy of Christie's, image © Author.

is mentioned in some nineteenth-century commentary, for example in connection with the enamel artist Charles Lepec in *The Art Journal*, 1867, the study of his patronage remains at an early stage.[8]

Certain re-discoveries and rescues over the recent decades are the subject of this brief survey.[9] While the emergence of missing works of art tends to create, *per se*, a *frisson* of excitement, recovered works from the Beckford and Morrison collections are in fact highly significant bricks in reconstructing, and thus giving greater substance to, the collecting habits of extremely wealthy and committed patrons.

## Beckford-provenance furniture and works of art

The John Crang organ (Figure 17.2) was built in the 1760s for Alderman Beckford's newly completed Palladian mansion. It was provided with a superb Rococo-decorated case, which appears to be the work of a significant, but so far unidentified, London cabinet-maker. The younger Beckford sold the organ in 1801; in 1817 it was presented to Towcester Parish Council, and installed in the church; in 1980, having been damaged by fire, it was donated to the Victoria and Albert Museum[10] and restored, but is now back in storage, so once again lost from view.

During the course of painstaking research undertaken for the 2001–2 exhibition, hitherto unpublished furniture for Fonthill 'Splendens' emerged. Notable, and commissioned by the younger Beckford, is a pair of late eighteenth-century gilt-bronze-mounted white marble side tables, supporting red Egyptian granite tops. These tables, perhaps supplied by Benjamin Vulliamy (1747–1811), represent a surprising and chaste essay in late eighteenth-century Neo-classicism, just at the moment Beckford was about to embark on the Gothic splendours of the Abbey.[11]

Despite all that is known of William Beckford's collections, for example at Brodick Castle, Arran (previously a seat of the Dukes of Hamilton, now National Trust for Scotland), Charlecote Park, Warwick (formerly the seat of the Lucy family, now National Trust), and museums around the world, much remains lost, for example eight of the ten distinctive ebony cabinets on stands that once furnished the St Michael's Gallery at Fonthill Abbey.[12] Nonetheless, major discoveries have been made.

Sometimes Beckford-provenance articles have been hidden in plain sight. One such is the ravishing ormolu-mounted ebony cabinet with *pietre dure* plaques (Figure 17.3) supplied by Robert Hume Senior to Beckford around 1815–20; the plaques were supplied by Beckford's friend and agent Gregorio Franchi. It was lot 1347 at the Fonthill Abbey sale of September and October 1823, bought by Robert Hume Junior, acting for Robert, 2nd Earl Grosvenor.[13] It remained at Eaton Hall until 2012.

William Beckford is famous for the richness of the works of art he commissioned, and for his active role in their creation. He would sometimes embellish, for example eighteenth-century French or Chinese ceramics with elaborate silver-gilt mounts, and he also had a passion for mounted hard stones. In 1989 one such piece emerged from obscurity at a London auction.[14]

**Fig. 17.2** Organ by John Crang, English, ca. 1760–5. Seen here at Towcester Parish Church, prior to its donation to the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1980, and subsequent restoration.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The lapis lazuli cup and cover with silver-gilt mounts (Figure 17.4) had apparently languished in Australia for the previous 40 years at least, where it was considered to have been a Victorian copy or imitation of a Renaissance original. Having arrived with the owner's valuation of £1,500, it was in short time identified

**Fig. 17.3** Cabinet by Robert Hume Senior, ca. 1810–5. Ebony with Italian *pietre dure* plaques, marble top, silk-lined interior and gilt bronze mounts, English.
Courtesy of Christie's, image © Author.

by the late Charles Truman (then of Christie's) as the 'Oval-shaped Fluted Cup and Cover, of lapis lazuli, on stem and foot of the same, mounted with silver-gilt, with bird's-head and serpent handles, finely chased with fruits' illustrated in the catalogue of the Christie's 'Hamilton Palace Sale' on 26 June 1882, as lot 2028, when it fetched £783.10s.0d. Prior to its arrival at Hamilton Palace, this luxurious work of art was recorded in 1844 in the drawing room at Lansdown Tower. Although this work had suffered losses, notably the elaborate finial (by then replaced, but now restored), it was acquired for the considerable sum of £143,000 by the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. The mounts of the cup and cover, marked for John Harris and dated 1826–7, incorporate elements of the Beckford family armorials, including elegant herons and snakes forming the handles. Gregorio Franchi may well have been responsible for sourcing the lapis lazuli, before 1819.[15] As the museum's then director, the late Michael Jaffé, noted at the time, the Beckford cup and cover was joining 'the Fitzwilliam's small but choice collection of rare mounted pieces … and the Limoges enamel triptych initialled by Pierre Reymond, a masterpiece in Beckford's Raphaelite taste …', formerly at Fonthill Abbey.

## Recent discoveries

More recently, one of Jaffé's successors as Director, Simon Jervis, added (as his first acquisition) another covered cup with a Fonthill connection, but this time one commissioned by Alfred Morrison (Figure 17.5). Morrison lent this enamel

**Fig. 17.4** Cup and cover, 1826/7. Lapis lazuli and silver gilt, marks for John Harris, English.

Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

on copper and gold object, dated 1866 (with many other works), for Lepec's celebrated display at the Paris *Exposition Universelle*, 1867. Following Morrison's death, it was sold at Christie's by his widow Mabel. On 25 January 1899, lot 390 was a 'Tazza and Cover, of enamelled and gilt metal, decorated with emblematic figures, arabesque foliage and other ornament, a figure of cupid on the lid …'. A buyer named Marcus acquired this, and several other lots by Lepec. Having disappeared from view, the Fitzwilliam covered cup (together with other Marcus purchases) re-emerged, unidentified, in 1994.[16] Charles Lepec is now recognised as arguably 'the most original and outstanding enamel artist of the nineteenth century'.[17] And his most significant patron, by a considerable margin, was Alfred Morrison.[18]

But returning to William Beckford, perhaps one of the most magnificent furniture discoveries during the research for the 2001 exhibition was the English gilt-bronze and Egyptian marble-topped centre table (Figure 17.6), in a private collection.[19] Keen furniture historians can also spot the table in an interior featured in Robert Altman's film *Gosford Park* (2001). The table is clearly shown in the 'grand

**Fig. 17.5** Covered cup, enamel on gold, by Charles Lepec (1830–90), French, 1866.

Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, image © Author.

drawing room' at Fonthill Abbey in John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill* (1823), pl. 5. The Fonthill table, the designer and maker of which remain unknown, was lot 1140 when sold by Phillips in 1823: 'A SPLENDID SALOON TABLE, formed of a circular slab of the very rare BRECHE UNIVERSELLE, of extraordinary size, the diameter being 4ft, 8 on a *grand and massive* STANDARD, formed of THREE BRONZE DOLPHINS … *extraordinary* SLAB was bought from Egypt by Emperor Buonaparte, and presented to Empress Josephine, and was purchased at the sale at Malmaison, in 1816.' The history of the top would doubtless have appealed to Beckford, as it would have done to Philip John Miles of Leigh Court, Bristol, who acquired the table in 1823.

Around the walls of the 'grand drawing room', surrounding the table, were part of a distinctive set of early nineteenth-century Roman gilded seat furniture (Figure 17.7) that once belonged to Cardinal Fesch (1763–1839), supplied for the Palazzo Buffalo-Ferraioli, Rome, and then sold at the Fesch Sale, 1816.[20] The design is attributed to Lorenzo Santi (1783–1839) and Dionisio Santi (born 1785/6). The chair shown here forms part of that suite, although it cannot be said for certain that the entire set subsequently passed to Beckford. Some of the Fesch chairs have a rounded pediment, whereas the present example has the distinctive triangular pediment seen in Rutter's engraving. The chair (now in a private collection) was at one stage with a London dealer called S. & H. Jewell (established 1830), and then lost from view until appearing, unidentified, at a West Country

**Fig. 17.6** Table, gilt bronze and African marble, English, ca. 1816.
Private collection, permission courtesy Christie's, image © Author.

auction in 2012.[21] The grandeur of the design represents a strand of Beckford's taste that included French furniture from the *ancien régime,* old master paintings and Asian lacquer.

A group of objects that typify Beckford's taste during the second and third decades of the nineteenth century are the 1780s Sèvres porcelain brown and white Asian-inspired pieces, of a type known at the time as 'des Indes'; these Beckford had transformed with silver-gilt mounts. There is a teapot and cover at Brodick Castle,[22] and the example shown here (Figure 17.8), with mounts marked for James Aldridge, 1827/8. Bet McLeod has identified the present cup and saucer, together with the coffee pot, in the 1844 inventory compiled by English & Son of Bath and Robert Hume of London following Beckford's death: 'A Brown & White Coffee pot. Tea cup and saucer – lined – very rich.'[23] The cup and saucer were later recorded in the inventory taken at Hamilton Palace.[24] In the Hamilton Palace sale, the present cup and saucer were described as 'A SMALL CUP AND SAUCER, chocolate ground, with flowers in relief, mounted with silver gilt'; they were bought by 'E. Joseph' for 18 guineas. Having not been recognised since the 1882 sale, this exquisite 'Beckford' object languished in the vaults of an American museum and was later de-accessioned, only to be spotted by an eagle-eyed London silver dealer, who sold it to a private collector. It was acquired in 2010 by the Art Institute of Chicago.

**Fig. 17.7** Armchair, Italian, ca. 1800–10. Gilt wood (the upholstery of later date), the design attributed to Lorenzo Santi (1783–1839) and Dionisio Santi (born 1785/6).

Private collection, image © Author.

The interiors of Lansdown Crescent, Bath, where Beckford moved after quitting Fonthill Abbey, and then Lansdown Tower, situated overlooking Bath, both contained works he had brought with him from the Abbey, and in addition some distinctive furniture, much of it assumed to have been designed by Beckford himself, working with his architect Henry Goodridge (1797–1864). Most of this furniture was designed for specific positions in these two locations, and while it was never actually on the Fonthill Estate, it was made to display objects that had been. Moreover, it shows Beckford in advance of contemporary fashion, commissioning robust Italianate furnishings that anticipate, by several decades, design from the later nineteenth century. For these reasons, two recently discovered examples of 'Bath period' furniture are included, and also because, in addition, they have a link to the Morrison family.

In the late summer of 1996 a coffer (Figure 17.9) appeared in a sale of nineteenth-century furniture at Bonham's (Knightsbridge). The distinctive design and remarkable quality of manufacture in this oak and gilt-bronze-mounted coffer, dating from 1831–41 and probably manufactured by the London cabinetmaker Robert Hume Junior, aroused no curiosity. It passed unnoticed (except by its buyer), despite the telltale cinquefoils on the top. Later in an English private

**Fig. 17.8** Cup and saucer, porcelain with silver gilt. The porcelain French (Sèvres), ca. 1780, the silver gilt English, with marks for James Aldridge, 1827/8.
Art Institute of Chicago, image © Author.

**Fig. 17.9** Coffer, oak with gilt bronze embellishments and silk-lined interior. The design attributed to H. E. Goodridge (1797–1864) and William Beckford (1760–1844), probably manufactured by Robert Hume Junior, English, ca. 1831–41.
Victoria and Albert Museum, image © Author.

collection, the coffer came back onto the market in 2004, and is now in the permanent collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum.[25]

In 2010, equally unappreciated, an identical coffer, this time complete with its stand, passed through an unidentified auction in Loughton, Essex, before surfacing

to more acclaim at Sworders, Bishop's Stortford, on 22 September 2010, lot 1657. Once fully understood, the coffer and stand were considered of such significance that it was subject to a temporary export stop by the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art, and subsequently acquired for permanent display at Lansdown Tower, now in the care of the Bath Preservation Trust.[26]

There were originally four of these cabinets, complete with stands, two at either end of the scarlet drawing room of Lansdown Tower. Between one pair, in a bay window, stood a pedestal (see Figure 17.10 below). The provenance of these coffers on stands is complicated, beyond the fact they were all certainly once at Landsown Tower, where two were illustrated in Edmund English and Willes Maddox (illustrations), *Views of Lansdown Tower, Bath*, London, 1844, pl. 4. They appear to have been offered twice at auction, first at English & Fasana, Bath, ... *Splendid Furniture from Lansdown Tower*, 4–5 May 1841, lot 25 or 26, possibly unsold or repurchased by Beckford, or acquired by James Morrison. Next they seem to have been included in English & Fasana, Bath, *Catalogue of the Splendid Furniture ... the Property of the Late William Beckford...,* 20–29 November 1845, day 8, lot 520 or 521, and later part of the group may have belonged to Susan, Duchess of Hamilton, at Easton Park, Suffolk, 1852.

As is evident from the suggested provenance (above), there remains confusion as to precisely when this coffer-on-stand left Beckford's possession and which of the four that he originally commissioned is shown here. It has only relatively

**Fig. 17.10** Willes Maddox, *Scarlet Drawing Room*. From *Views of Lansdown Tower, Bath*. Bath: E. English, and London: T. McLean, 1844, plate 4.
16081, RIBA Collections.

recently come to light that James Morrison, Alfred's father, owned two of the coffers (eventually at Basildon Park, Berkshire), although the documentation seems to conflict with the apparent 1841 and 1845 auction sale evidence.[27]

The tripod that stood between two of the cabinets-on-stands shown in the Willes Maddox view of the Scarlet Drawing Room at Lansdown Tower,[28] also probably manufactured by the London cabinet-maker Robert Hume Junior, has recently been identified in a European private collection, having passed unidentified through a Christie's South Kensington auction in the 1970s. It corresponds precisely with the one described at the 1845 Lansdown Tower sale as '[a] very beautiful Oak Tripod, enriched with bold water gilt mouldings. The top is formed of a circular solid slab of rare Lumachello marble, from the Himalaya mountains, 19 inches in diameter. In the plinth is another slab of the same costly marble.'[29] The silver-mounted Chinese vase originally on top of the tripod has been identified by Bet McLeod,[30] who has also noted that the tripod pedestal is visible in a photograph, probably dating around 1872–3, of the Beckford Library in Hamilton Palace, suggesting that it was part of the consignment of objects sent from Bath to Hamilton Palace between 1844 and 1850. Beckford

**Fig. 17.11** Bookcase, ebony and ivory, English, ca. 1865. Designed by Owen Jones (1809–74) and manufactured by Jackson & Graham (1836–85).

Courtesy of Christie's, image © Author.

probably owned more than one pedestal of this form, and a second (with a *lapis Lacaemonius* top and probably *alabastro Fiorito* below)[31] is the one formerly in the collection of the architect and pioneer collector of Regency furniture, Professor Albert Richardson (1880–1964), who acquired his in April 1939 from Frederick Jones, Bedford; this is now in the collection of the Bath Preservation Trust at Lansdown Tower.

## Alfred Morrison's collections

The furniture and works of art commissioned and collected by Alfred Morrison for Fonthill (as well as for his London house at 16 Carlton House Terrace), while generally less well known, are nonetheless being increasingly recognised as outstanding achievements by manufacturers active across Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century. As more documentation and surviving work comes to light, the desirability of a comprehensive exhibition seems overwhelming.

One of the grandest interiors at Fonthill, designed by Owen Jones and manufactured by Jackson & Graham, was the room 'in Cinquecento style'[32] lined with ebony and ivory cabinets (as well as panelling and a chimney) to display Morrison's

**Fig. 17.12** *Amazon,* enamel on copper (?), in original ebonised frame with velvet and silver gilt mount, by Charles Lepec (1830–90), French, 1864.
Victoria and Albert Museum, image © Author.

Chinese porcelains acquired from the looted Summer Palace in Peking (Beijing). The fireplace was sold at Sotheby's (London), 17 February 1984, lot 95, while other examples appeared more randomly. The grandest element, a curved cabinet created for an apse (Figure 17.11), first appeared (described as Italian) with a dealer in London's Westbourne Grove in the 1980s; it was soon thereafter included in an exhibition at the Fine Art Society.[33]

Most recently two more works by Charles Lepec, acquired by Morrison and later exhibited at the Paris *Exposition Universelle*, 1867, emerged from obscurity: *Atalanta* and *Amazon* (Figure 17.12).[34] These had been acquired in 1899 by the Manchester-born watchmaker and later collector Evan Roberts (1836–1918), and then passed by descent; they are now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Of the residents who once graced the Fonthill estate, William Beckford and Alfred Morrison stand out. As works they commissioned and collected continue to resurface, greater light is shed on two voracious patrons, both possessed of exceptional determination and taste. In both cases, these sons of wealthy collectors were responsible for accumulations on a scale and of types that place them at the pinnacle of those whose activities made a lasting impact on contemporary and later taste.

# 10

# Building and Demise of Little Ridge

Michael Drury

In March 1902 Hugh Morrison visited his architect, Detmar Blow, to settle matters relating to a new house on the Fonthill estate. Little correspondence survives but curiously the written estimate for £3,507.15s was headed 'Berwick St Leonard Manor House'.[1] Stranger still, further examination shows that costs included the careful dismantling of this seventeenth-century ruin. Fortunately Hugh's diaries plot the sequence of events,[2] and all is explained when it becomes clear that his new house was not going to be a new house at all but the rebuilding of an old one on a new site (for additional contextual material see Chapter 7).

The plan was to take down the old manor house (Figure 18.1) and rebuild it four miles away, below the ridge to the east of the lake, as shown in Blow's topographical sketch (Figure 18.2).

**Fig. 18.1** *The Old Manor House, Berwick St Leonard*, from Sir Richard Colt Hoare's *Wiltshire*, published 1829.

Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society at Wiltshire Museum, Devizes.


**Fig. 18.2** Sketch by Detmar Blow showing the proposed site for the re-erected manor house at Little Ridge.

From the Wyndham Papers at Petworth House, by kind permission of Francis Wyndham and the Earl of Egremont.

A draft of a letter from Morrison to his local land agent, written on the back of Blow's estimate, mentions the use of 'traction power', i.e. steam-driven traction engines, to move the salvaged materials, expressing concern that it might damage the roads. It goes on to say that the building work was

> to be executed by estate men, the present staff to be augmented as necessary … Blow proposes to get a clerk of works and also to have his own man down here for some time, he is going to try and get Frank Green but if he is engaged he will look for somebody else.[3]

## Detmar Blow: architect of Little Ridge

Blow was an unusual architect and he worked in unusual ways, shunning the conventional use of contractors. His mentor William Morris had taken to architecture after reading Ruskin as an undergraduate, but turned to other things because, as his friend the architect Philip Webb said, 'He found he could not get into close contact with it; it had to be done at second hand.'[4] Detmar Blow eventually succeeded where Morris had failed, training first as an architect and then under Webb's guidance as a stonemason, working with his own hands in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Frank Green was a mason too, but not an architect, and over the 10-year period prior to the Fonthill project he had worked alongside Blow, recently providing the craft skills on site that Blow was no longer able to offer personally as he tried to expand his practice.

Detmar Blow may have recently forsaken his lifestyle as an itinerant architect/mason for a more conventional office base, but had Morrison called on Blow that March unannounced he might still have been surprised by Blow's working arrangements. His office address at 9 King's Bench Walk in London's Inner Temple seemed a highly respectable one, but behind its outward appearances it was as unconventional as its tenant. Blow lived there with his mother and his brother Sydney, who described the arrangement thus:

> My mother, when she realised there was no chance of my throwing up the theatre and going back to grow flowers with her in West Sussex, had come to live with us there ... We provided her with the one bedroom that the chambers boasted, and Detmar and I re-organised the large living room. Two deep recessed bookcases that stood each side of the fireplace were dismantled, and in their place two patent beds were erected that shut up in the daytime flat against the wall and hidden by beautiful William Morris curtains. Not even the nosiest of parkers would have guessed that beds were produced from behind those curtains every night.[5]

Where Blow got any architectural work done is not clear, but he still found 'respectable offices with framed perspectives on the walls and clerks slaving in the background'[6] unconducive, as did his old friend W. R. Lethaby, who condemned them in those terms. Blow's father had died in 1898 and King's Bench Walk was his son's attempt at respectability, with an eye to turning his career in a more profitable direction while accommodating his younger brother and his widowed mother and keeping the family afloat.

Certainly respectable offices had not featured in Detmar Blow's career previously. After early European travels with John Ruskin, he had fallen in with William Morris and his circle through the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and, dressed in a waggoner's smock, had driven the great man's coffin to the churchyard in Kelmscot on a yellow farm cart decorated with willow boughs.[7] Adopting an itinerant career to work with his own hands, his wanderings had taken him to Wiltshire even before he came to Fonthill, first to East Knoyle in 1892, where he had repaired the church tower as resident architect for Philip Webb, and then in 1897 to Lake House, on the Avon north of Salisbury, where he had rescued an Elizabethan manor house with striking similarities to Berwick St Leonard.

Blow's introduction to the Morrison family could have come as a result of his work at Lake House, or perhaps via East Knoyle: Webb's client there, the Hon. Percy Wyndham, was well known to Hugh's parents, his mother inaugurating the South Kensington School of Art Needlework with Mrs Percy Wyndham.[8] Blow stayed in Knoyle for some time while working at the church and was a frequent visitor to Clouds, the house Webb designed for the Wyndhams nearby. In fact, though, it is more likely that the connection between Morrison and Blow was made through another Wiltshire client, the Antrobus family at Amesbury. Blow had worked there

more recently; indeed he was already involved in projects for Lord Antrobus at Amesbury Abbey when, on the last day of the nineteenth century, an event occurred that was to bring him more widespread recognition.

On 31 December 1900 two stones forming part of a trilithon in the outer ring at Stonehenge fell during a storm. Antrobus owned the monument and entrusted Blow, now something of an acknowledged expert in the repair of ancient buildings, with the remedial work. But a national debate ensued concerning their re-erection, growing to encompass the whole question of the future of the monument and the stability of the remaining stones.[9] In the end those that had fallen were not re-erected until 1958, though Blow did straighten the tallest of the remaining standing stones. Lady Antrobus sent her friend Mabel Morrison a photograph album illustrating the work in progress. Detmar Blow featured, in conjunction with members of the Antrobus family (Figure 18.3), and it is unlikely to be entirely

**Fig. 18.3** Detmar Blow at Stonehenge in about 1901 with his client Sir Edmund Antrobus standing behind. The child astride the fallen stone is his client's son, also Edmund, killed at Ypres in 1914. William Gowland, the archaeologist, is on the left.

From an album given to Mabel Morrison by Lady Antrobus, Fonthill Estate Archives.

coincidental that Mabel's son Hugh first consulted Blow about his new house soon after the work at Stonehenge was complete.

As explained by Caroline Dakers in Chapter 7, Hugh Morrison's building projects benefited from the wealth generated by previous generations. Hugh had married in 1892 and was a wealthy man following his father's death in 1897, but he needed a new home because his widowed mother was bequeathed Fonthill House and the surrounding parkland for the rest of her life. To find a site, Hugh had to negotiate with his uncle and his brother; in 1902 he agreed a land exchange to enable the construction of Little Ridge, as the re-built Berwick St Leonard manor house was to be known, the site being outside that part of the estate that came under his direct control. The earliest payments on Hugh's 'New House Account' were made in 1902 and included three weeks' wages for Basil Stallybrass, the clerk of works, amounting to £6.15s.0d.

## Blow's Little Ridge team

If Blow was no ordinary architect, then Stallybrass was no ordinary clerk of works either. An architect in his own right, he joined Blow in 1899 and, like Blow, became a craftsman too. Involved in several of Blow's earlier projects, he acted as his 'man on the spot' at Stonehenge, learning archaeological techniques that came to the fore when the drainage was dug at Fonthill in November 1903. Stallybrass recorded a meticulous archaeological excavation, identifying Romano-British remains.[10] A 1991 publication suggests that although the standards of excavation and fieldwork set in the nineteenth century by the pre-eminent archaeologist Lt. General Pitt Rivers were not achieved by others for at least 30 years after his death in 1900, an exception is found in the work Stallybrass did at Fonthill.[11]

In Frank Green's absence, James Neale may also have joined Blow's team on site. Like Green, Neale was a local mason: both men had worked with Blow at East Knoyle, and it is likely that Neale worked for the Wyndhams at Clouds, as well. Neale was another regular member of Blow's itinerant band in the last decade of the nineteenth century, in charge on site when Blow was away at Lake House and performing a similar role during the difficult repair and rescue of another church tower at Clare in Suffolk. Although it does not specifically state that he worked at Fonthill – and Hugh Morrison's diaries do not mention him – a description of Little Ridge in *Country Life* waxes lyrical about these local tradesmen:

> Each a giant at his trade and often in stature, they hate to leave their old homes and so they farm a few acres when building is not plentiful. When a very noble church tower was repaired close by, the mason was not addressed

**Fig. 18.4** Little Ridge under construction: the old Berwick St Leonard Manor House being rebuilt on its new site.

Fonthill Estate Archives.

> by his name, Jim or Neale but as Farmer Jim and once I heard this friendly warning coming down the tower, 'Jim, thee must tap the rick, there be snow-storm coming.'[12]

Blow and his team were aided by the Fonthill Estate workforce and together they carefully recorded and dismantled the old manor house at Berwick St Leonard and transported it for re-erection. On a sloping site, levels were built up at the front to form a formal raised garden, contained within a stupendous rampart as shown in Blow's early sketch. Sadly all that remains of the original Little Ridge today is this great bastioned garden, upon which is now perched its diminutive successor, the present Fonthill House, designed by one of Blow's pupils, Trenwith Wills (see Chapter 8, particularly Figures 8.1 and 8.6).

According to Stallybrass, the carefully numbered stones from Berwick St Leonard were packed in straw and transported (by steam traction) to the new site (Figure 18.4):[13]

> The most accurate measured drawings were first taken of the irregularity of the old mason's work in order that this might be retained. Then each stone was taken down, labelled, penned in hurdles, removed to the new site and set up again in complete harmony with its former position and appearance...[14]

## The building of Little Ridge

With nothing to be seen of Blow's original house today, the *Country Life* description is all the more valuable and remains the best record of Little Ridge. It applauds Blow's hands-on approach and elaborates upon the benefits that could be obtained only by a direct relationship between the architect and the building process:

> Mr Blow [felt] secure that the fragmentary skeleton of the Berwick St Leonard manor house could be re-vivified and re-clothed as a modern house on a modern site and yet not lose its ancient savour. What it should be like his well-practised mind's eye could see. But that is not all that is necessary. How often a client, thoroughly pleased with his architect's inviting plans and charming drawings, is yet much disappointed in the ultimate result! Somehow all the charm seems gone; there is something harsh, awkward and repellent that has been introduced, although, seemingly, the plan has been carried out. And this may not be the architect's fault beyond his falling in with the client's demand that the 'job' should be 'contracted' for and the lowest tender accepted without due inquiry made or even a passing thought given as to whether the builder and his men either have or are capable of acquiring any understanding of what the architect has in mind. Thus tone and texture are missed; form is very slightly but quite disastrously warped; there will be something in the laying of the stones and in the working of the timber that falsifies the whole original conception ... Assuredly an architect must realise that his work will be a failure if there is not some measure of mutual understanding and some sympathy of aim between him and those who execute his designs. No-one knows better than Mr Blow the difficulty of wedding the airy spirit of three centuries ago to the sturdy need of today, and no-one has learnt how to overcome it more successfully.
>
> At Little Ridge he [Blow] realised what he wanted was at hand. He had only to seek and find. Masons, carpenters,[15] plasterers, some already knowledgeable, all quite receptive, were collected, and the old-new house took shape excellently well ... No form of decoration was more popular in Wiltshire three hundred years ago than plasterwork, and therefore this was largely resorted to at Little Ridge. Not, however, in the form of exact reproduction of old examples, but in new designs founded on precedent [Figure 18.5]. Mr Stallybrass, who also acted as clerk of the works to Mr Blow, was the chief craftsman and modeller[16] ... The birds and animals seen in several [of the schemes] recall the delightful manner of mediaeval beasts. Ceilings of varied and original design are to be found in most of the principal rooms ... recalling many an example dating from Elizabethan days.[17]

**Fig. 18.5** The dining room at Little Ridge in 1912: the plasterwork is attributed to Basil Stallybrass.



Basil Stallybrass was on site by the end of summer 1902.[18] Referred to in relation to the drainage in November 1903, he must have been there on a regular basis in 1904 too, undertaking the plasterwork during the final stages of construction. The local geology did not escape his attention either, Stallybrass noting that a bed of local stone suitable for roofing tiles had still been worked in the recent past.[19] Hugh Morrison's diaries suggest that he was less interested in such things himself. He does not waste words and there is hardly an adjective to be found on their pages, although one appears in an early entry relating to his wife and their architect: 'Mary thought him charming.'[20] Nonetheless, the entries do at least give a chronology to what was to become his never-ending building programme. Though the house was practically complete by the end of 1904, the Morrisons did not actually move in to Little Ridge until May 1905 and by the time the *Country Life* article was written in 1912, the rebuilt Berwick St Leonard manor house had already been extended with the addition of a nursery wing to the east (Figure 18.6).

Hugh and Mary had long wanted children but having them had not been easy. It is sad but perhaps not surprising that a search through Mary's letters reveals so little about the building of her house and so much about their tragic

**Fig. 18.6** Little Ridge from the south-east. The nursery wing, added in 1907, is on the right, connected to the original house by the great Dining Room window.


and often painful quest for a solution to fertility problems.[21] Her eventual pregnancy must have been hugely gratifying, for Hugh as well as Mary; quite apart from their own emotional relief, it resolved the inheritance problem described by Caroline Dakers in Chapter 7. But after so long trying, the pregnancy must have come as something of a surprise, and as a consequence the new wing was built fast. Blow was again their chosen architect and the new nursery and kitchens were already under discussion in November 1906, just before their son John was born in December**.** An initial sketch, in Blow's hand (Figure 18.7), was titled the 'John Wing'.[22]

**Fig. 18.7** 'The John Wing', as proposed, from the east, in a sketch by Detmar Blow.

RIBA drawings collection.

## Little Ridge becomes the new Fonthill House

The finishing touches were added to this addition in 1908 but Hugh was not content with his extended house for long. His uncle Charles and his aunt Ellen both died in 1909, leaving even more money, and as Hugh's fortune increased so did his building ambitions. The nursery extension had necessitated alterations to the hall and dining room, and a new library was created within the existing shell of the old house in 1908. Soon after came a new laundry and alterations to the stables – but this was all small change, as seen from Hugh's new position of enormous wealth. In 1909 Blow started to plan a major addition to his house on Morrison's Scottish estate in Islay and then, in 1910, a new London town house in Halkin Street was first discussed, eventually completed in 1913. Blow had entered into partnership with Fernand Billerey in 1906 and, although Blow himself still appears from time to time in Hugh's diary entries, many of the meetings concerning Islay and Halkin Street were with Billerey, who was no doubt responsible for most of the detailed work if not much of the overall design too.

Though hugely expensive, this work was nothing compared to Hugh's next great building project (Figure 18.8). In 1911 his mother had bought Shawford Park in Hampshire and, with the prospect of her moving out of the old Fonthill House, Hugh decided on an enormous scheme of enlargement at Little Ridge to make it the dominant house on the estate. But Fonthill House still stood, enabling him to move back to the house Mabel was vacating for the duration of the building works, intending to demolish it once his grand new home was complete. This time Morrison and Blow used Trollope and Colls., a conventional contractor, and a new road was constructed from the house down to the lake. A new bridge connected Little Ridge with the old Fonthill House and Mary moved their furniture back across to it, but their residence there proved a longer one than either she or her husband might have imagined.

Drawings are dated 1913 and work appears to have commenced that September, but the war soon brought it to a virtual standstill. Nonetheless, although building slowed, it may never have stopped completely. Hugh records a meeting with Blow in March 1915 'and settled future work at Little Ridge', but the Morrisons, living in the old Fonthill House, had to divert Trollope's attention to remedial work following a fire there soon after. With the house only partly damaged the Morrisons did not move out, and the old house survived until 1921 when it was eventually pulled down, Little Ridge taking its name. Completed at last, the grandiose new mansion that Little Ridge had become was eventually reoccupied on 6 October 1920, when Hugh records '[w]e returned to Little Ridge for first time since 1913' (Figure 18.9).

## The demise of the new Fonthill House

The house was an anachronism almost before it was finished in the changed circumstances that followed the cessation of hostilities. A 50-metre corridor ran between the kitchens at one end and the long gallery at the other; the drawing room was 12 metres (40 feet) long. Morrison's financial resources might have provided the domestic staff required for such a plan 10 years earlier but there was less desire for such grandeur in the changed society of the 1920s. Inheriting the name was an ill omen. The new Fonthill House, planned in those final optimistic years before the Great War, was destined to suffer the same fate as the previous Fonthill House, and only 50 years later. The huge extensions, becoming unsustainable before Hugh Morrison died in 1931, seemed even more impossible to his son; by the 1960s John (by then Lord Margadale) and his wife were already considering a more manageable house to stand on the same site. In June 1971[23] they commissioned Trenwith Wills, a former assistant of Billerey's, to design a replacement. Within a week an estimate had been obtained for demolition and the County Planning Officer had confirmed that as the house was not listed it would not be necessary to seek consent.

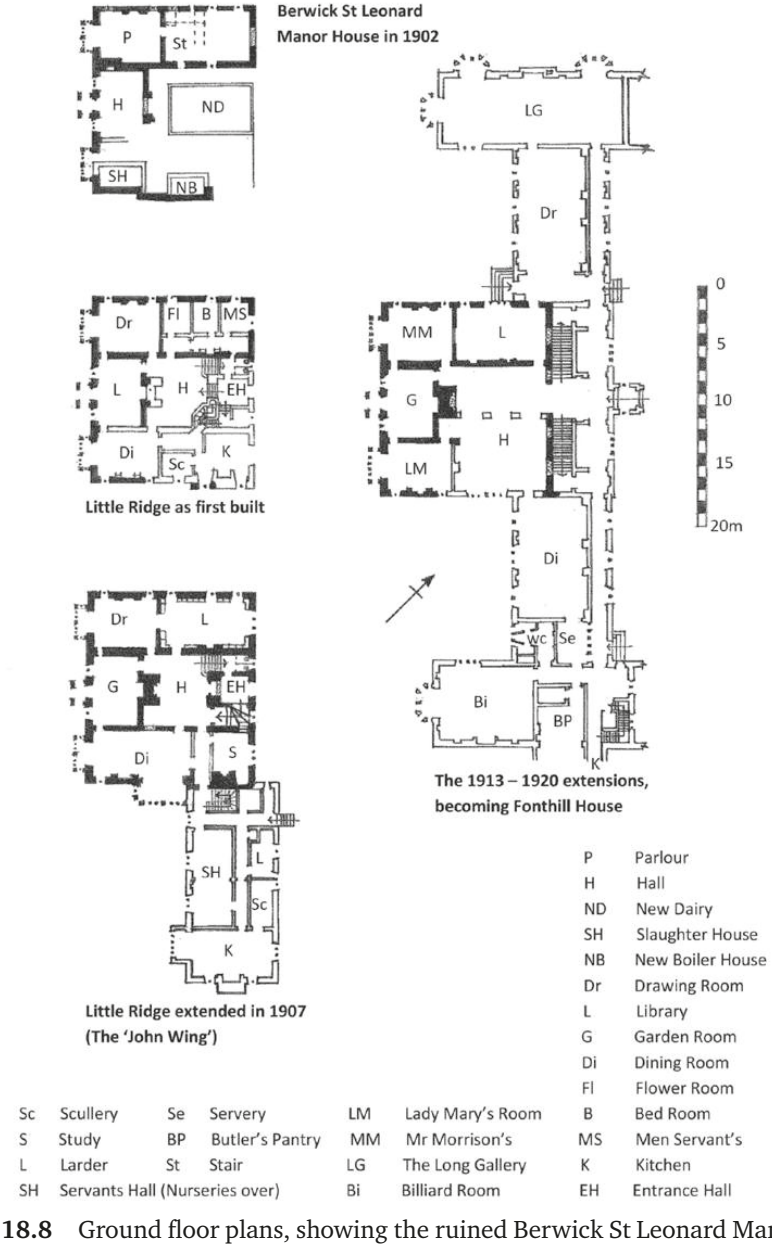



**Fig. 18.8** Ground floor plans, showing the ruined Berwick St Leonard Manor House prior to demolition, its re-erection as Little Ridge and subsequent extensions and enlargement.

Drawn by the author from plans in the RIBA drawings collection.

**Fig. 18.9** Fonthill House from a painting by C. Geoffroy-Dechaume, 1925. This view from the south-west shows Fonthill House in its final form, extended to either side of the original centre section (which stands behind the lone tree).
From a photograph in the author's collection.

Resistance came from the Blow family, who alerted *The Times*: by November Nikolaus Pevsner, then chairman of the Victorian Society, was writing to Lord Margadale, outlining the history of the house, describing it as 'one of the particularly good buildings by Detmar Blow' and suggesting the wings be pulled down and the original centre part kept. Confronted by *The Times* diarist and also the local paper, the *Salisbury Times and Journal* (who drew attention to the house's seventeenth-century origins), as well as Pevsner and the Victorian Society, Margadale adopted delaying tactics, as he admitted in a letter to his new architects.[24] The Department of the Environment, claiming that it 'had been informed that the house was completely burnt out by a fire and had been substantially rebuilt after the First World War',[25] refused the Victorian Society's request for spot-listing what they claimed to be 'one of the most notable of early twentieth century houses'.

By May 1972 demolition (Figure 18.10) was complete and a piece in *The Times* Diary on 12 June only served to clarify what had become a very confused picture:

> Lord Margadale now says 'There never was a fire in the house. The only fire was in 1919 (sic) in another Fonthill House, on a different site in the estate. My father pulled that down in 1921. I've never said there was a fire in this Fonthill. I cannot help it if a Government department gets the wrong end of the stick.' A spokesman for the department says 'We were first approached last autumn … It is now clear that there was a misunderstanding, and in the

**Fig. 18.10** The house during demolition in 1972. The large window in the centre lit the Hall.

Fonthill Estate Archives

> course of the telephone conversation the two houses became confused. … It now seems there would have been a strong case for spot-listing'.[26]

Lord Margadale read the paper over breakfast and wrote to his political colleague, Peter Walker, then Secretary of State for the Environment:

> I read The Times this morning … I am afraid (the article) denigrates your Ministry and casts slight doubts on my honesty … As far as the house that was burnt but not burnt down was concerned, I do recall this very clearly as I was in the house at the time; I remember on Good Friday morning being woken up with my room full of smoke to be rushed downstairs, passing the Hot Cross Buns floating on the kitchen floor in three feet of water.[27]

Only on the Fonthill estate could confusion over the fate of one house lead to the loss of another. And John Morrison's hot cross buns, symbolic of a resurrection to come, are strangely appropriate in concluding this story of the long succession of remarkable buildings that have graced this landscape. No sooner is one condemned than another rises again.

In the case of Little Ridge, its rise and fall reflects the career of its designer, for in both cases early promise was compromised by an abundance of riches. Detmar Blow, the last disciple of Ruskin and one whose early years were steeped in Morrisian socialism, was to make his name as a society architect and end

his days disgraced by the richest man in England. The more they heard of his itinerant, bohemian lifestyle, the more his up-market clients seemed to want his services, and by the time work started on the great extensions at Fonthill, Blow, now rivalled only by Lutyens in the domestic market, was building Hilles, his own house on the Cotswold escarpment near Painswick. When the original staircase from Little Ridge was replaced, the original treads, made in solid oak from the Fonthill estate, were re-used at Hilles. Little Ridge is mirrored in Blow's porch too, but as at Fonthill there was a hiatus in his building programme during the Great War. Blow's practice fared better than most but work slowly dwindled and in August 1917 Lutyens, whom Blow had known from their time together at the South Kensington School of Art, wrote to his wife with apparent glee: 'I met Blow last night. He is doing no work! except a house for himself and living with Westminster running his house, a sort of bailiff and Maitre d'Hotel! as far as I can make out!' [28]

Lutyens was right. Blow had accepted a post as private secretary and manager of the Grosvenor Estate for 'Bendor' Grosvenor, the Second Duke of Westminster (1879–1953), whom he had known at Clouds since early days in Wiltshire. The Duke's widowed mother married the Hon. George Wyndham, who inherited Clouds in 1911; his great-grandfather was Richard, Marquess of Westminster, who had commissioned the 'new' Fonthill Abbey. A trusted friend, Blow became far more than the Duke's agent and was given power of attorney in estate affairs. Part of his informal arrangements with Westminster involved leasehold properties in Mayfair, claimed by Blow's family to have been a gift, though later the Duke declared he had not intended Blow to profit from them by sub-leasing.[29] A rift between the two rapidly widened and despite Blow's offer to hand back whatever amount was requested, he left the Duke in 1933 amid malicious gossip. His health suffered and although repayment was eventually accepted, Blow's last years at Hilles were wrecked and he died a broken man in 1939. He was not to see the second war or the destruction of so many country houses in the two decades that followed, culminating in the final loss of the house that his idealistic Little Ridge had become.

# 11

# Encounter with Fonthill: Upper Lawn Pavilion and Smithsons' Construction

Amy Frost

> Upper Lawn was located on what was originally William Beckford's land, at a time when it could be seen as sheer folly to spend all we had on building something for ourselves: but the act was one of deliberate commitment: the siting was deliberate, for Beckford had built England's greatest Folly.
>
> (Alison Smithson, 1986)[1]

The mid-twentieth century saw a new addition to the history of architectural creativity on the Fonthill estate. In 1959 architects Alison and Peter Smithson purchased part of the old Upper Lawn Farm and constructed the Upper Lawn Solar Pavilion Folly (Figure 19.1). Originally intended as a summer house, the building became a second home, used as a retreat until the Smithsons sold it in 1982.

## The Smithsons

Alison and Peter Smithson were members of a group of young architects in post-war Europe who reacted against the ideas and methods of the older generation leading the process of rebuilding after the war. This group emerged out of CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) in the early 1950s to form Team 10, and were searching for a closer communication between form and social need in architecture and urban design.[2] For Alison and Peter Smithson this corresponded to ideas they had been exploring since 1949 through their design for Hunstanton School in Norfolk; ideas of form, materials and construction that became known as New Brutalism. The Smithsons further developed their ideas from the 1950s into the 1960s through designs such as the proposals for the Golden Lane housing estate (1952), the Economist Building (1959–64) and the Robin Hood Gardens housing estate (1966–71). Alongside their constructed buildings and unexecuted competition designs, the Smithsons' theories were developed

**Fig. 19.1** Alison and Peter Smithson, Upper Lawn Solar Pavilion Folly, 1959–62. Photograph, Amy Frost, June 2017.

and disseminated through their extensive output of publications and teaching. Their writings ensured that their influence would spread beyond built works, and established the Smithsons as two of the most influential European architects of the second half of the twentieth century.

The Upper Lawn Solar Pavilion Folly at Fonthill, built 1959–62, and which the Smithsons continued to adapt and occupy until 1982, played an essential role in the development of these ideas, serving as a testing ground for experimentation in form and material use. Upper Lawn was fundamental to the Smithsons' interest in creating buildings designed for energy efficiency; its design was an exploration of how to maximise natural light and harness solar warmth. The role of Upper Lawn in the Smithsons' own architecture and in the genesis of modern sustainable architecture is what most assessments of the building focus upon.[3]

In such assessments the importance of the setting of the Fonthill estate is acknowledged and the integration of the new building within the existing landscape highlighted. But the presence of William Beckford within the layers of the landscape's history, which was highly valued by the Smithsons and determined their choice of the site, has been noticeably overlooked.[4] As the opening quotation of this essay illustrates, the Smithsons chose to build at Fonthill because of the presence of Beckford, and the location of their building with a direct sightline to where the remains of Fonthill Abbey still stood was just as deliberate. The

Smithsons were following Beckford's example and building a folly at Fonthill; they were also sharing his desire to make that folly a retreat within the wider landscape.

The connection between the history of Beckford at Fonthill and the Smithsons' building is expressed by them in *Upper Lawn Solar Pavilion Folly*, published in 1986, four years after they had sold the building.[5] The book is more than just an architectural monograph; it is a record of the evolution of a building and how it can change through inhabitation. It documents the family's occupation of the house through diary entries and photographs, telling the story 'as a romantic vignette of a rural play-life of week-end hermits, in a hermitage that is an unassuming permanent-tent'.[6] Together with the unpublished notes by Alison Smithson in the Smithson Family Collection, the book reveals far more than has previously been discussed in overviews of the house about the influence of Beckford on the Smithsons.

## The Smithsons' encounter with Fonthill

According to Peter Smithson, Alison had known Fonthill as a child, which prompted her to revisit the estate in the mid-1940s.[7] Beckford's Fonthill Abbey drew her to these early visits, and her discovery of the Abbey remains in the summer of 1945 establishes romanticism in Alison's ideas about the place:

> First visit of discovery … was like the Fairy Story of the Sleeping Princess, where the Prince has to hack through brambles and thorn hedge to discover the castle, not in this case intact but since books then tended to claim hardly a stone of the Abbey remained, it was magical enough, when the car had blindly forced its way through the wilderness of the overgrown track, to find a compact building with no trace of damage or repaired break.[8]

The romantic landscape of Beckford's Fonthill was the ancestry that helped inspire the Upper Lawn Pavilion to be what Peter Smithson regarded as 'the true child of the English Poetic tradition', and the account of the 1945 discovery confirms that knowledge of the Abbey and of Beckford was fundamental to why, and what, the Smithsons built on the estate.[9]

The next recorded visit to Fonthill was Easter 1950, when the Abbey remains were captured by Peter Smithson in photographs. Visits continued in the lead-up to their purchasing a piece of Fonthill in 1959. The estate as a whole was already influencing their ideas during this time, and notes to a photograph of the side arch of the large archway reveal that the 'running belts of trees' leading to the archway from the road had informed the landscape aesthetic of their design for Churchill College, Cambridge, in 1958.[10]

The importance of Beckford's Fonthill in inspiring these early visits and the eventual construction of the pavilion is confirmed in *Upper Lawn Solar Pavilion Folly*, where the first illustration is not a view of the subject of the book, but rather

the map of Beckford's estate published in John Rutter's *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey* in 1823. The map locates Upper Lawn farmhouse, or West Lawn farmhouse as it was known in 1823, within the wider domain of Beckford's landscape.

The map is followed by a history of the estate told through published accounts, starting with an extensive extract from John Britton's 1801 description of Fonthill Abbey from *The Beauties of Wiltshire*, with Alison's annotations on what elements of planting and buildings survived in the 1980s. At the bottom corner of the page is a quote from Beckford that Alison originally wanted to appear as a 'verbal illustration' on the page:[11]

> I have been haunted all night with rural ideas of England the fresh smell of my pines at Fonthill seemed wafted to me in my dreams. The Bleating of my sheep and lowing of my herds in the deep valley of Lawn Farm fairly sounded in my ears.

Written in May–June 1787 while Beckford was in Portugal, this moment occurred the year after his exile from England, when the idea of retreating back to Fonthill would have seemed far away. As an adult perhaps Alison was also haunted by memories of visiting Fonthill as a child, which led to the 1945 rediscovery of the remains of Fonthill Abbey. Or perhaps, writing the book in 1986, four years after they sold Upper Lawn Pavilion, she chose this quotation from the *Journal of William Beckford in Spain and Portugal 1787–1788* because she too was haunted by the sale of the house and the loss of the retreat that they had found there. [12]

The ideas for the design of Upper Lawn Pavilion can be traced to 'Patio and Pavilion', the Smithsons' exhibit for the *This is Tomorrow* exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1956.[13] The exhibition explored the concept of a 'symbolic habitat' that responds to the basic human needs of 'a view of the sky, a piece of ground, privacy, the presence of nature' and leading to basic human urges 'to extend and control, to move'.[14] At Fonthill the Smithsons discovered just such a view of sky and piece of ground in October 1959. They set about following those human needs by extending and adapting an existing building to create a testing ground for the development of further architectural ideas.

## The construction of Upper Lawn Pavilion

The site that the Smithsons purchased included one of a pair of partially demolished farm cottages built into the north side of a walled garden (Figure 19.2). They discovered that there had been a farmhouse on the site as early as the fifteenth century, and the retention of parts of the historic fabric was essential to the design that followed.[15] The earliest sketch by Alison Smithson for Upper Lawn dates from 1958, showing that the ideas inspired by the found building were forming before the purchase had even been completed.[16] A diagram followed, illustrating how the

**Fig. 19.2** Upper Lawn Cottage, 1959. The older second cottage has already been removed.

Smithson Family Collection.

walls and surfaces that were to be kept became the foundations for the layers of the new structure.

The exterior walls of the cottage that joined with the north garden wall were retained, as was the gable fireplace wall at the west end. The south walls of the cottage facing into the garden were removed to allow for the new building to lead directly into the walled garden space (Figure 19.3). The west fireplace gable wall, once the connecting wall between the pair of cottages, became the central wall of the new building, with a concrete beam embedded in it supported by concrete posts at either end. Onto this was fixed a timber frame for a two-storey structure (Figure 19.4). This concrete and softwood frame was then covered with teak and aluminium and the large windows were then pushed up internally to the external skin. The ground floor was designed to open up to the east into a yard on the footprint of the demolished second cottage, and to the south into the rest of the walled garden. The upper storey sat above the old north wall level, with glazing on three sides offering panoramic views over the Fonthill landscape.

The new building took shape during the early years of the 1960s and was at first lived in 'camp-style' under a tarpaulin covering the frame.[17] This 'life in a polythene bag', as Peter Smithson called it, adapted as further layers were added to the house until it was nearly complete by 1962.[18] From the beginning the house was

**Fig. 19.3** Upper Lawn under construction looking north.
Smithson Family Collection.

intended to act as both a home and a testing site for methods and materials that the Smithsons felt would not yet be accepted in London, such as pitch-fibre drain pipes or polyester water tanks. It was also to test the performance of materials such as high purity aluminium sheet, which if successful they would then begin to use in work for clients.[19] They sought to create a 'climate house' through the opening up to, and shutting out of, the outside climate, as well as through the construction materials used, and by testing what solar gain could be achieved in a building with glazed south, east and west walls.[20]

## 'Jerome-ing' at Upper Lawn

In the 1960s the driving idea behind the creation of such an idyll at Fonthill was much the same as it had been for Beckford in the 1790s, the search for 'a place wherein to be restored to oneself, as a source of ones energies'.[21] Four years after they had sold the building, Alison Smithson referred to the 23-year period of her family's creation

**Fig. 19.4** Upper Lawn under construction looking north-west.
Smithson Family Collection.

and inhabitation of the Upper Lawn Pavilion at Fonthill as having been a period of time spent 'Jerome-ing'.[22] For the Smithsons 'Jerome-ing' to, from and at Fonthill was a means of retreat from the city to a place where, like Saint Jerome to his cell or to the wilderness of the desert, they could withdraw to reflect and experiment; a place that could be 'in the Saint Jerome sense, a study from which to appraise, contemplate, consider and re-assess, the city'.[23] This idea of the pavilion or folly being a place of retreat is also the link between William Beckford's vision for the estate and what it meant to England's leading post-war architects 160 years later.

In April 1991 Alison Smithson wrote 'Saint Jerome; The Desert … The Study', a pamphlet discussing painted representations of Saint Jerome and his two habitats, the cell and the desert.[24] These two retreats – one created, the other discovered – were sought by Saint Jerome so he could be alone to dedicate himself to the study of the printed word or the natural world. Both environments were to stimulate and challenge thoughts, ideas and the individual's concept of the idyll. For Alison the habitats of Saint Jerome illustrated that

> [w]hether in an urban setting or in nature, all creativity relies on being cocooned. Such a sense of inviolability relies on its *fragment* of functional space being within an *enclave* encapsulated in its turn within a protective territory.[25]

Beckford too shared an interest in Saint Jerome, as seen in the number of paintings he owned of the subject, similar to those representations Alison Smithson wrote about.[26] Beckford sought a similar retreat, as a young man escaping into

the Fonthill landscape from Fonthill House, and as an adult creating both Fonthill Abbey and Lansdown Tower in Bath as retreats for study and contemplation within a landscape. It is not hard to imagine Alison visiting the National Gallery in London to see *Saint Jerome Reading in his Study* by Antonello da Messina from 1475, the work that she used to illustrate the cover of the pamphlet, and finding displayed near it *St. Jerome in a Landscape* by Giovanni Battista Cima da Conegliano, once owned by Beckford.

To the Smithsons Fonthill represented 'a place made idyll: a dream of a stress free way of life'.[27] They sought 'Time to be in touch with nature' away 'from the drawing board and the telephone', and created a retreat where they could write and work on developing ideas.[28] As work progressed at Upper Lawn the idea of 'Patio and Pavilion' from the 1950s evolved into a new theory, 'Pavilion and Route', published in 1965.[29] This established the concept of a building being conceived as one part of a larger environment, a *fragment* of an occupied space that would sit within its own protective boundary or *enclave*. This enclave in turn would sit within a larger *territory* or *domain*, usually a landscape or view. At Upper Lawn the 'Pavilion and Route' theory was realised, so that 'the Pavilion sat in the walled yard and garden as in an enclave, the view was the domain'.[30]

For the Smithsons, the combination of their fragment (the pavilion), the enclave (the walled garden) and the domain (the Fonthill landscape) was the same as it had been for Beckford. The Abbey was Beckford's retreat, the cell in which to study surrounded by his books and objects; the surrounding landscape was the wilderness in which he could concentrate on nature. Through the Smithsons' eyes, Beckford's Abbey was similar to the pavilion, their fragment; the landscape inside the Barrier wall was similar to their enclave; the wider Fonthill estate was similar to their domain. Upper Lawn Pavilion and Fonthill Abbey both offered the possibility of a special relationship between house, inhabitants and nature. Beckford would have envied the Smithsons' ability to view the landscape through walls of glass, or to slide back a door, open up a wall and step out into nature, or let nature in.

The Smithsons' time spent in Upper Lawn Pavilion was documented through photography and journals. The Upper Lawn diaries kept by Alison record changes to the house and landscape, particularly noting the effect of weather and the changing seasons. She recorded new planting, first crops, the changing lives of the family within the enclave, and detailed their time 'Jerome-ing'.[31] Peter's photographs run alongside, recording the building work, the life within the 'polythene bag' and the changes to the finished building that occupation made. The building within its landscape was frequently photographed, as was the view from the Pavilion, especially north towards the remains of Fonthill Abbey. It was similar to the way the Beckfords had captured their layers of occupation at Fonthill through the eighteenth-century country house portraiture of Fonthill House, or through J. M. W. Turner's views of Fonthill Abbey seen from different vistas, at different times of day and season.

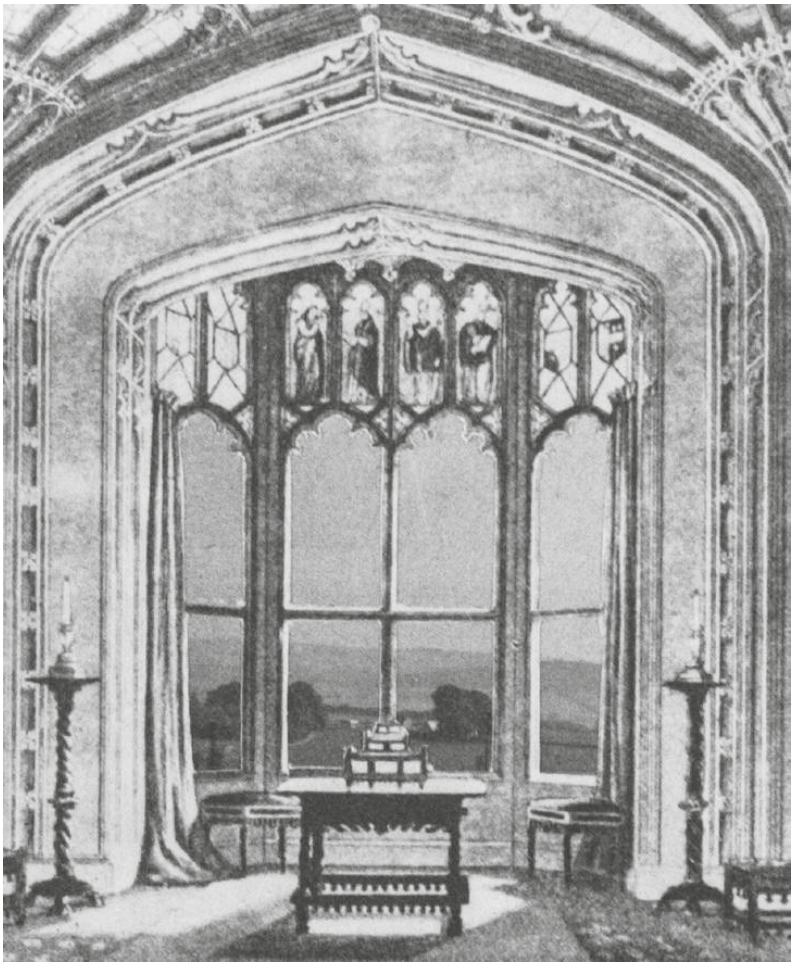


**Fig. 19.5** Detail from *Photomontage of Upper Lawn as if in the view from Fonthill Abbey: that is, set into an engraving by Cattermole of a window of Fonthill Abbey*, Alison Smithson, early 1960s. Upper Lawn Pavilion is to the left of the casket on the table.

Smithson Family Collection.

The 'Jerome-ing' journey itself became a further exploration of ideas, as the Smithsons' car, a Citroën DS, became the 'think tank' for Alison's observations on the movement of human and machine through nature. *AS in DS*, published in 1983, is the diary of a passenger travelling through nature as seen from the inside of the car, and of that machine itself moving through nature. Most of the journeys chronicled are those made between London and Fonthill.[32] Illustrated by views of the Fonthill landscape from the car, and of the car in the Fonthill landscape, *AS in DS* reveals the transition between the urban life of London and the escape to Fonthill.

When 'Jerome-ing' the car was the moving cell, or the private room on wheels that carried them to and from the wilderness.

The idyll ended when Fonthill no longer offered the protected retreat. For Beckford it was a forced withdrawal from an idyll he could no longer afford. For the Smithsons it came in 1982, when new owners moved into the neighbouring cottage to Upper Lawn and inevitably disrupted the 'idyll'. The Smithsons last visited Upper Lawn in March 1982, shortly after it was sold.[33]

## Upper Lawn Pavilion – as seen from Fonthill Abbey

In the early 1960s Alison Smithson created an illustration that offers perhaps the greatest insight into the connection between Upper Lawn and the history of architecture integrated into landscape at Fonthill. She took a copy of the engraving by Cattermole of the St Michael's Gallery of Fonthill Abbey that had been published in 1823 in John Britton's *Graphic and Literary Illustrations of Fonthill Abbey* and pasted onto it an image of Upper Lawn Pavilion as it would have been seen from the south oriel window,[34] thus projecting a view of their folly as seen from William Beckford's had Fonthill Abbey survived (Figure 19.5). The image adds further weight to the deliberate choice of building on the Upper Lawn site, by showing how the vista between the two buildings, even if only imagined, was at the heart of what the Smithsons created.

Recent works to the landscape at the remains of Fonthill Abbey have made it possible to see this fantasised view in reality. Similarly from the Upper Lawn site a glimpse of the surviving Lancaster Tower of Fonthill Abbey can also now be seen. It is not difficult to picture Alison and Peter Smithson looking at the same vista through the landscape, and imagining what the view of Fonthill Abbey, had it survived, would have been like from the Upper Lawn Solar Pavilion Folly.

# 12

# The Culture of Gothic Tradition and Videogaming

Greg Buzwell

No discussion of Gothic literature would be complete without mention of William Beckford and his novel *Vathek* (1786), so it came as no surprise when both author and novel cast lengthy shadows across the British Library's major exhibition *Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination* in the autumn of 2014. The show celebrated 250 years of Gothic literature, ranging from Horace Walpole's novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) to contemporary supernatural tales by authors such as Clive Barker, Sarah Waters and Neil Gaiman. Beckford, inevitably, featured heavily in the section of the display devoted to Gothic fiction's first golden age, taking his place alongside Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis as someone who brought new ideas to the increasingly popular world of terrifyingly outré fiction. For the exhibition the British Library was able to borrow Sir Joshua Reynold's portrait of Beckford from the National Portrait Gallery in London and the superb architect's model of Fonthill Abbey from Beckford's Tower and Museum in Bath. The loans were exhibited alongside illustrated editions of *Vathek*, some of Beckford's letters and John Rutter's magnificent volume *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey* (1823). Taken as a whole these exhibits resulted in this part of the exhibition being arguably the most striking and memorable in the gallery.

## The Gothic tradition and videogaming

In addition to exploring the genesis and development of Gothic literature the exhibition also addressed the influence of Gothic fiction upon fashion, music, lifestyle, film, photography, art and architecture. There was however one area of creativity that the curators of the show, myself included, found it difficult to reference – namely Gothic literature's considerable impact upon computer games. There are literally thousands of computer games in which Dracula-style castles, dense haunted forests, sinister cults, ruined abbeys and moonlit, zombie-infested

graveyards play a large part. During the planning process for the exhibition the inclusion of videogames and computer animations was discussed at length, but a lack of space and money ultimately counted against the idea. This gap was partially filled, however, with the aid of the *Off the Map* competition, and once again Fonthill Abbey provided the imaginative spark that brought this additional element of *Terror and Wonder* to life.

*Off the Map* is an annual videogame design contest for UK higher education students. Each year the competition encourages students to create video games, text adventures and virtual environments using digitised British Library 'assets' (i.e. digitised maps, views, illustrations, sound recordings, manuscripts and printed texts taken from the British Library's collections). The 2014 competition, run by the British Library in partnership with Crytek, a videogame design company, and GameCity, a cultural centre for videogames in Nottingham and the home of the National Videogame Arcade, took the *Terror and Wonder* exhibition as its inspiration. Students had a choice of three options around which to base their entries: the seaside town of Whitby, which features so prominently in Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (1897); Edgar Allan Poe's short story 'The Masque of the Red Death' (1842) or Fonthill Abbey. Specific assets for the Fonthill Abbey option included images from Rutter's *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey,* plans of the estate, topographical drawings of the Abbey and its grounds, written accounts of the Abbey and, for an extra dash of background colour, extracts from accounts and letters relating to Beckford's life, together with selected passages from *Vathek*.

## Nix

The eventual winners of the 2014 competition were a team from the University of South Wales who chose Fonthill Abbey as the focus for their design. The fact that so little of the Abbey survives arguably worked in the students' favour. We know what Fonthill Abbey looked like, we have the paintings, plans and descriptions, but the fact it is now largely absent from the landscape – a ghostly presence that exists purely in the imagination – meant that the students could pursue surreal flights of fancy. Put another way, their setting for the game was under no compulsion to resemble a specific, identifiable location. The result was a truly original concept and one that was in many ways reminiscent of the daring use of sublime landscapes frequently found in Gothic novels. The winning game, called *Nix*, and created by Jackson Rolls-Gray, Lauren Filby and Faye Allen, challenged participants to reconstruct the ruins of Fonthill Abbey by solving a series of puzzles in an ethereal underwater world. *Nix*, ideally, was designed to be enjoyed in conjunction with the Oculus Rift, a virtual reality headset for 3D gaming, which enabled the user to explore the submerged Abbey ruins in stunning three-dimensional detail. The device even gave the students the idea for their team name. They entered the competition as 'Gothulus Rift', a neat play on words combining the romantic past

and the technologically advanced present. The use of a virtual reality headset also dictated one of *Nix's* most dazzling features, namely that it is set largely underwater. Virtual reality headsets can induce motion sickness in some users, but by setting the game underwater the visuals could be slowed down and rendered in a gentler, more languid and poetic fashion – a terrific example of how necessity often leads to creative leaps in imagination.

The imagery featured in the game is stunning. Players find themselves looking up through Fonthill's submerged central tower as seaweed sways from the stonework (Figure 20.1); books glide like jellyfish from the shelves in the library and the sun, filtered through several fathoms of water, bathes the Abbey's shattered walls and drowned rooms in a ghostly shade of green. The sight of Fonthill's famous tower surrounded by fish and seen through an eerie underwater light is precisely the type of sublime spectacle – beautiful, haunting, awe-inspiring and terrifying – so beloved of Gothic authors. Visually, the imagery looks like the setting for one of H. P. Lovecraft's more fantastical tales or the set design for a Hollywood film set in a post-apocalyptic future. As Tim Pye, the lead curator of *Terror and Wonder*, commented after *Nix* had been announced as the competition winner:

> What is so impressive about the *Nix* game is the way in which it takes the stunning architecture of the Abbey, combines it with elements from its troubled history and infuses it all with a very ghostly air. The game succeeds in transforming William Beckford's stupendously gothic building into a magical, mysterious place reminiscent of the best gothic novels.

**Fig. 20.1** The spectral ruins of Fonthill Abbey as seen in the videogame *Nix*. The game imagines the Abbey underwater, overgrown with seaweed and illuminated by muted, distant sunlight.

Going further, the videogame's curators turned one of Gothic fiction's most common themes on its head. Ruins in Gothic novels act as both a short-hand method of evoking a past that has irrevocably vanished and as a means of inspiring a sense of melancholy. Taking arguably the most impressive Gothic Revival house ever built – and one made all the more remarkable by its almost mythical history and its tragic collapse – and then asking modern game players to recreate it in a virtual world reverses this process. Rebuilding the vanished walls of Fonthill Abbey in digital form brings the glories of the past back to life in new ways. Potentially, by the same means, any lost building, any vanished landscape and even any lost civilisation can be given a digital afterlife.

In conclusion Fonthill Abbey, while only being a small part of the *Terror and Wonder* exhibition, came to provide several of its most enduring memories. Many of the comments from visitors praised the iconic exhibits (Doctor Dee's spirt mirror, which was on loan from the British Museum for example, or Bram Stoker's manuscript for his theatre adaptation of *Dracula*). Others commented on the quirky and surreal (the model of the 'were-rabbit' we were able to borrow from Aardman Animations, or the vampire slaying kit we were delighted to have on loan from the Royal Armouries in Leeds). Many, however, perhaps because of its near total disappearance from the landscape, were enthralled by the story of Fonthill Abbey and its flamboyant creator. The *Nix* videogame combined the iconic with the surreal. It took the past and brought it into the present: nineteenth-century architecture combined with brilliant storytelling and twenty-first-century technology to produce something totally new. For a building which no longer exists Fonthill Abbey is curiously ever-present in the Gothic imagination, a ghostly reminder of how the glories of the past cast shadows that stretch to the present day and beyond.

# 13

# Conclusion

Caroline Dakers

Fonthill remains largely private. There are no public footpaths across the original estate formed by Sir John Mervyn in the mid-sixteenth century. The three-mile-long wall built by Lord Cottington around his park survives in part; it kept his herd of deer inside and everyone else outside (a farmer from Fonthill Gifford who demanded the right to drive his cart across the park was defeated in the law courts in 1714). The one footpath which provided the residents of Fonthill Gifford access to their parish church was removed when Alderman Beckford demolished St Nicholas's church in 1746. Much of William Beckford's Barrier survives, longer and higher than Cottington's

**Fig. 21.1** John Piper, *Approach to Fonthill*, 1940. Piper photographed and painted the Fonthill archway and the south lodge during the war, but it appears he was unable to access land inside Beckford's Barrier.

wall, and there are no public footpaths within its curtilage. Beckford's intention was to keep just about everyone firmly outside, including the Hunt and the curious.

A slight change occurred in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries coinciding with the British aristocracy and landed gentry accepting some of their social responsibilities, investing in model villages, for example, and schools and schoolteachers. The employees and neighbours of the Grosvenors, the Shaw Stewarts and the Morrisons were permitted access on an annual basis to the grounds, to enjoy garden parties, sports days and the celebration of significant birthdays and weddings. The Morrisons continue this tradition on their estate. However, after the Second World War almost all the land within Beckford's Barrier was once more closed off to the curious (see Figure 21.1); William Burn's 'new' Fonthill Abbey was demolished in 1952 and bats took up residence in the surviving Lancaster Tower. Still a few trespassers penetrated the woods.

The research for this book has been both exciting and unusual. We have been able to criss-cross the Fonthill landscape, looking below the ground as well as inside structures, measuring trees and pulling carved stones out of the mud of the lake, studying proposals for new Fonthill houses in the planning stages and completed. We hope our findings provide a rich mosaic of material for historians.

Not surprisingly, our research has uncovered gaps in the narrative, questions with no answers (at present). So we also hope that foregrounding names and revealing uncertainties will trigger responses from our readers, be they archivists, general readers or residents of Fonthill itself.

Our archaeologist David Roberts (Chapters 2 and 9) would of course like a very large grant to carry out further work across the whole region. The first stage would be a proper LiDAR and aerial photographic survey of the whole region, to better place everything we already know in context, and probably to find large numbers of new settlements and field systems from prehistory and the Roman period.

Neil Burton (Chapter 3) is still in the dark about what happened to the Cottingtons, to their wealth and their collections. For over a century they occupied one of the largest mansions in Wiltshire, with estates in Berkshire, Hampshire, Middlesex and Kent. Was it through their allegiance to the Roman Catholic church and the ill-fated campaigns of James Stuart, the Old Pretender, who made Francis Cottington a Baron in 1716, that they gradually lost their wealth? Did the Cottingtons visit James Stuart at his court in Avignon or, later, in Rome? Where was the 2nd Baron Cottington buried? And where are the Cottington family records?

The monuments of the Mervyns and Cottingtons at St Nicholas's church remain missing. Did Alderman Beckford bury them when he demolished the church, as Colt Hoare reported in his *Modern History of Wiltshire*? It would have been easy enough to move them up to the new parish church.

Amy Frost is also puzzled by missing bodies (Chapter 4). We presume Alderman Beckford and his wife still rest underneath the Marquess of Westminster's Victorian church, but no special provision was made for them when the new church was built. The loss or destruction of the Alderman's papers (how, by whom?) leaves

**Fig. 21.2** Joseph Theakston, St Anthony of Padua.
Photograph by Caroline Dakers.

an enormous gap in our knowledge of his building plans at Fonthill, including the elaborate gardens revealed in the two paintings he commissioned and that are now attributed to Antonio Joli.

Amy, like David Roberts, has an expensive project in mind, to realise the actual height of William Beckford's Abbey, perhaps using a balloon or a laser beam; to visualise the impact of this iconic building in the landscape. Paintings by Turner suggest the effect was profound.

All of us would like to investigate further the precise whereabouts of the materials, fixtures and fittings from the demolished houses. This could be a community project, cataloguing chimneys and chimney pieces, doors and windows, pieces of dressed stone, now forming part of later mansions, farmhouses, cottages and barns at Fonthill. One of the Alderman's chimney pieces found its way to a house in Montagu Square, Marylebone; a staircase balustrade from 'Splendens' was re-erected by James Wyatt at Dodington Park in Gloucestershire; a ceiling by

Casali is now at Dyrham Park, also in Gloucestershire. Joseph Theakston's statue of St Anthony of Padua, commissioned by William Beckford for Fonthill Abbey, has a new position a few miles from Fonthill in the grounds of Wardour Castle (see Figure 21.2), while Rossi's statue of St Anthony resides in a school in Lisbon. The ebony and ivory display cabinets designed by Owen Jones for Alfred Morrison's Fonthill House found a new use in the billiard room of a house in Shaftesbury before being sold at auction; one piece can be seen in Dunedin Public Art Gallery, New Zealand. Closer to home, a fine wooden floor in Detmar Blow's Little Ridge was acquired by Bernard Nevill and relaid in his house, formed for its part out of the stable block of the Grosvenors' 'new' Fonthill Abbey. The original gate piers of the 'new' Abbey were moved a few miles away to form the entrance of Hays House, now a retirement home.

The physical debris of Fonthill is scattered far and wide; recovering Fonthill is an endless task.

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    As the length of formative growth and maximum tree-ring width is critical to the calculation of age estimates, two other Fonthill *Cedrus libani* in the area of Fonthill Splendens were re-measured and inspected for accessible tree ring evidence. It is clear that, for the Fonthill cedars, the transition from formative to mature stages of growth occurs at approximately 80 years, rather than 60 years as applies to some other species. Using the only two data-sets published and applying the Forestry Commission calculations to the 7.27m girth measurement of the Valley Cedar gives a youngest likely planting date of 1673 ("good" site with 60 years formative growth tree rings up to 6mm) and oldest likely planting date of 1448 ("poor" ground with 80 years formative growth and tree rings up to 4mm).

    Applying the Fonthill branch tree-ring evidence of an 80-year formative growth period, with rings up to 5mm prior to mature narrowing, results in an acceptable age of 378 years, planted approximately 1639.' Roy Wilde is a volunteer archaeologist on the AONB Foundations of Archaeology project, the Salisbury Museum 'Finding Pitt-Rivers' project and (in progress) a small excavation on a Late Iron Age site on the Wilton Estate.
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3. The purchase of Fonthill from Cottington was tied up in Beckford paying off mortgages that Cottington owed, the course of which can be found in the Abstract of the Title of William Beckford to his Estate in Wiltshire, Wiltshire History Centre, 1990/2/3. See also Schedule of Indenture, Wiltshire History Centre, 413/277.
4. The Inigo Jones attribution was made by John Rutter in *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey* (Shaftesbury: J. Rutter, 1823). The attribution to John Vardy is from Timothy Mowl, *William Beckford: Composing for Mozart* (London: John Murray, 1998), 2. Mowl had changed this attribution from the builder Hoare in an earlier work, Timothy Mowl and Brian Earnshaw, *Trumpet at a Distant Gate: The Lodge as Prelude to the Country House* (London: Waterstones & Co., 1985), 89–91.
5. Richard Pococke, visit 3 July 1754, published in *The Travels Through England of Dr R Pococke*, ed. James J. Cartwright, vol. II (London: Camden Society, 1889), 47.
6. July 1769 Diary of the Countess of Shelburne, Bowood MSS, Vol. 5, 2–5.
7. Pococke, *Travels Through England*, 47.
8. Amount spent annually reported in the *Leeds Intelligencer*, 25 February 1755.
9. For reports of the Fonthill fire see also *Oxford Journal,* 22 February 1755 and *The Gentleman's Magazine,* 25 February 1755, 90.
10. Walpole to Bentley, 23 February 1755, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W. S. Lewis and Warren Hunting Smith, vol. 35 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937/1984), 211.
11. See Gauci, *William Beckford*, Chapter 3.
12. Mike Fraser, Danae Beckford-Stanton and John Fox, "William Beckford's Paternal Half-Siblings and their Descendants," *Beckford Journal* 10 (2004): 14–29.
13. Jacques-Henri Meister, *Letters Written During a Residence in England*, Letter XIX, ca. 1793, reprinted in William Gregory, *The Beckford Family* (London: Simton, Marshall & Hamilton, 2nd edn 1898), 26.
14. These were the arms of the London branch of the family, Beckford himself having yet to have his own.
15. Duddingston House, Edinburgh, of 1760, designed by William Chambers, John Wolfe and James Gandon, *Vitruvius Britannicus*, Vol. IV (London: 1767), 14–17.
16. Wolfe and Gandon, *Vitruvius Britannicus,* Description of plates, 9. Fonthill House is illustrated on plates 82–7.
17. John Britton, *The Beauties of Wiltshire*, Vol. I (London: Verner & Hood, 1801), 211. Rudolf Wittkower noted that Fonthill was based on Houghton as recorded in the engravings for *Vitruvius Britannicus* and those found in Isaac Ware's *Plans, Elevations and Sections of Houghton in Norfolk* (London: 1735), although Beckford himself is not listed as a subscriber to either book. Wittkower, "Pseudo-Palladian Elements in English Neo-classical Architecture," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 6 (1943): 157. A visitor in 1799 also compared the north elevation to another Campbell design, Wanstead House in Essex: Diary of Lady Ann Rushout, 15 July 1799, transcript in private collection.
18. Wolfe and Gandon, *Vitruvius Britannicus*; Lathom pls. 94–8, Moulsham pls. 30–1 and Kertlington pls. 32–6.
19. Pocket Book of Thomas Hall recording his Tour on Horseback and by coach in the company of Cap. W Trevarion, Thursday 20 September 1798, Wiltshire History Centre, 776/652.
20. James Paine attribution is Reginald Blomfield, *A Short History of the Renaissance in England 1500-1800* (London: G Bell & Sons, 1900), 224, an attribution also shared by Howard Stutchbury in *Colen Campbell*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967), 109. Blomfield comments that Fonthill is one of the last houses to use such colonnades to link the main house to its wings, adding further argument concerning the outmoded nature of Fonthill's design. For the evidence of Hoare as designer of Fonthill see Howard Colvin, "Hoare, -", *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects*, 3rd edn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 499 and John Harris, "Fonthill, Wiltshire: Alderman Beckford's Houses," *Country Life*, Nov. 24 (1966), 1373.
21. Count Felix-François d'Espie, *The Manner of Securing all Sorts of Buildings from Fire*, Trans. Louis Dutens, (London: H. Piers, 1756), edition is dedicated to Beckford. See Eileen Harris and Nicolas Savage, "Espie," in *British Architectural Books and Writers 1556-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 190–1.

22. Visit dated 5 September 1800, Richard Warner, *Excursions from Bath* (Bath: Crutwell, 1801), 120.
23. Newspaper accounts show that in February 1764 the copper roof was replaced again when a previous roof was blown off during a storm, suggesting either two such incidents or that the roof remained 'thatched' for two years before being replaced, *The Ipswich Journal*, 4 February 1764.
24. Temple to William Pitt, 7 September 1762, Public Record Office 30/8/61, fols.71–2, noted first by Gauci, *William Beckford*, 259, nb.12.
25. William Beckford to his son, ca. 1768, London Metropolitan Archives, Willis Collection, Q/WIL/26, first pointed out by Gauci, *William Beckford*, 159.
26. Advert in *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* December 1768. Payment to Moulton in 1769 of £100, National Archives C12/1321/8, 2nd schedule. Moulton continues to be listed as based at Fonthill in *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 29 November 1784.
27. Gauci, *William Beckford*, 154–5.
28. For an assessment of the furnishing and collections at Fonthill at this time see Philip Hewat-Jaboor, "Fonthill House: 'One of the most Princely Edifices in the Kingdom'," in *William Beckford 1760–1844: An Eye for the Magnificent*, ed. Derek E. Ostergard (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 51–71.
29. Diary of the Countess of Shelburne, Bowood MSS. Drysdale to Rev. James Nairne, 13 October 1768, reprinted in the *Wiltshire Gazette*, 14 February 1924, and another undated but ca. 1768 letter reprinted 21 February 1924.
30. Drysdale, *Wiltshire Gazette*, 14 February 1924.
31. Gauci, *William Beckford*, 161.
32. Drysdale, *Wiltshire Gazette*, 21 February 1924
33. See Hewat-Jaboor, "Fonthill House," 54–5.
34. National Archives, C12/1321/8, 2nd and 4th Schedules.
35. Drysdale, *Wiltshire Gazette*, 21 February 1924.
36. Soane Museum, Adam 50/31–32, and for ceilings Adam 50/91–2.
37. Soane Museum, Adam 51/14.
38. Although the span of the single arch bridge raised on rockwork is smaller in size. Single arch bridge is in the Soane Museum, Adam 51/12.
39. Soane Museum, Adam 50/30. Thanks to Stephen Astley for first suggesting this is a design for Witham not Fonthill.
40. *London Chronicle,* 23 September 1762 and *London Daily Advertiser,* 27 September 1762.
41. Abstract of Sundry Deeds relating to Priory of Witham by Isaac Heard, Bodleian Library, Beckford MS, c.88.
42. Illustrated in "Colen Campbell," *Vitruvius Britannicus*, Vol. II (London: 1717), pls. 91–2.
43. Gauci, *William Beckford*, 154.
44. Survey by Thomas Browne, April 1761, Somerset History Centre, DD/WYp, Box 1. P.15. Pt3. First pointed out by Robert Wilson-North and Stephen Porter, "Witham, Somerset: From Carthusian Monastery to Country House to Gothic Folly," *Architectural History* 40 (1997): 93.
45. Shelburne Diary, Bowood MSS, Vol. 3, 295.
46. On Beckford possibly turning down a title due to the impact it might have had on his political position see Gauci, *William Beckford*, 125.
47. Moulton's advertisement in the *Salisbury and Wiltshire Journal* of 24 December 1768 lists work for Beckford in Wiltshire 'and Somerset', meaning Witham.
48. Wolfe and Gandon, *Vitruvius Britannicus*, vol. 5 (London: 1771), pls. 38, 39–40, 41–2. Rev. Warner illustrates a version of Witham on the route of his tour in 1800, but there is no mention of any house in his text. Warner, *Excursions from Bath*, 119. The allusions to history and lineage that Witham presented would have been of equally strong importance to the Alderman's son. However, the son would eventually demolish the Adam house to sell the building materials in 1810 and reluctantly sell the estate in 1812.
49. "Parishes: Eaton Bray," in *A History of the County of Bedford*, Victoria County History Vol. 3, ed. William Page (London: 1912), 369–75.
50. *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 15 June 1767.
51. The painting was sold alongside other Casali works in 1801 to William Wyatt Diamond of the Theatre Royal in Bath, where they were displayed in the ceiling. In 1845 it was sold again to Col. Blathwayt at Dyrham Park where it can be seen today in the ceiling of the Hall.
52. Last Will and Testament of William Beckford, The National Archives, Prob. 11/959. William Thomas Beckford is recorded as being 'in general in a bad state of health' and that remaining at Fonthill would be best for his 'weakly constitution'. Testimony of Maria Beckford, National Archives, C12/1325/21.
53. Ibid. For the claims over the will see Brian Fothergill, *Beckford of Fonthill* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), 35–7.
54. "Testimony of Maria Beckford," in *Passages from the Diary of Mrs Philip Lybbe Powys of Hardwicke, Oxon*, ed. Emily J. Climenson (London: Longmans, 1899), 166–7: Mrs Philip Lybbe Powys used the phrase, the 'Great Beckford, as he is usually styled,' on a visit to Fonthill in 1776.

55. Temple to William Pitt, 1 September 1762, National Archives, PRO, 30/8/61, fols.71-2, quoted in Gauci, *William Beckford*, 145.
56. Lybbe Powys, *Diary*, 166.
57. Sir Richard Joseph Sulivan, *Observations Made during A Tour through Parts of England, Scotland and Wales in 1778*, 3rd edn, Vol. I (Dublin: 1785), 127; Lybbe Powys, *Diary*, 166–7.
58. Beckford to Cozens, 4 December 1778, reprinted in Lewis Melville, *The Life and Letters of William Beckford* (London: Heinemann, 1910), 60–6.
59. *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, Monday 1 October 1781.
60. The note is dated 9 December 1838 and attached to the original letter to Louisa Beckford dated spring 1782. For full transcript of the note see J. W. Oliver, *The Life of William Beckford* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 89–91.
61. See Robert Gemmett, *The Consummate Collector: William Beckford's Letters to his Bookseller* (Croydon: Fonthill Media, 2014).
62. *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 11 October 1784.
63. On 27 November 1784 the *Morning Herald* reported news of a 'grammatical mistake in regard to the genders' involving Beckford and Courtenay.
64. Beckford could have been imprisoned and tried under the Buggery Act re-enacted by Elizabeth I in 1563 had enough evidence been found. For further reading on Beckford and sexuality see Jon Millington, *A Beckford Bibliography* (Warminster: Beckford Society, 2008), 57–60 (Part One: Sexuality).
65. On 27 November 1784, the *Morning Herald* printed the following story: 'The rumour concerning a Grammatical mistake of Mr. B---- and the Hon. Mr C---, in regard to the genders, we hope for the honour of Nature originates in Calumny!'
66. *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 5 June 1786.
67. Scheme No. 1 illustrated in Soane Museum, 57/30 (title No. 1), 57/33 and the upper sketch of 57/35. Scheme No. 2 Soane Museum 57/31 (titled No. 2) and lower sketch of 57/35. Scheme No. 3 Soane Museum 57/34 (titled No. 3) and 57/32.
68. Soane Museum 57/36 and Bodleian Library, Beckford MS, a.1.
69. Christopher Woodward, "William Beckford and Fonthill Splendens: Early Works by Soane and Goodridge," *Apollo* 147 (February 1998): 31–40, includes a visualisation of the proposed corridor drawn by Ptolemy Dean. See also David Watkin, "Beckford, Soane and Hope: The Psychology of the Collector," in *William Beckford 1760–1844: An Eye for the Magnificent,* ed. Derek E. Ostergard (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 38–9.
70. Hewat-Jaboor, "Fonthill House," 60.
71. For the Tapestry Room chimney piece see Soane Museum 81/1/25, 81/1/29, 81/1/39 and 81/2/88 and Bodleian Library, Beckford MS c.84, fol.111, and for the coffered niche see Soane Museum 57/18 and Bodleian Library, Beckford MS, c.84, fol.112.
72. Soane Museum 8/5/8, 8/5/7 and 57/36; Bodleian Library, Beckford MS, f.1 bed design, f.2 section of bedchamber. The design matches the description of the bed sold in 1801.
73. Britton, *Beauties of Wiltshire*, 234–5.
74. For discussion by John Harris on the gallery in country house history see Woodward, "William Beckford and Fonthill Splendens," 37.
75. Prince of Wales visit recorded by Thomas Wildman, Wildman to Beckford 30 September 1794, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Lett., C. 501, fols. 10, 11v.
76. Government Art Collection no. 9164, "Coloured Sketches in the Collection of the Fonthill Estate."
77. See Megan Aldrich, "William Beckford's Abbey at Fonthill: From the Picturesque to the Sublime" in ed. D. Ostergard, *William Beckford*, 118.
78. Beckford to Wyatt, 10 April 1794, reprinted in Melville, *The Life and Letters of William Beckford*, 214.
79. Hewat-Jaboor, "Fonthill House," 61.
80. Beckford to his mother, 29 November 1796, Bodleian Library, Beckford MS, c.16, fol. 7. Diary of Ann Rushout, 15 July 1799, 51, quoted in Hewat-Jaboor, "Fonthill House," 61–2.
81. Both are in the Beckford Tower Trust collection, gifted in 1978 to the Beckford Tower Trust from the Bath Industrial Heritage Museum, formerly in the possession of Ralph Keevil. James Lees-Milne attributed the cornice to the work of Soane at Fonthill (Beckford Tower Trust accession card index), but no evidence within the records of Soane's work for Beckford confirms this.
82. Hewat-Jaboor, "Fonthill House," 63–7.
83. Pocket Book of Thomas Hall, 20 September 1798. Referred to by Britton as the Tartarian room; Britton, *Beauties of Wiltshire,* 240.
84. Warner, *Excursions from Bath*, 119.
85. Warner, *Excursions from Bath*, 126.
86. Britton, *Beauties of Wiltshire*, 215.
87. Britton, *Beauties of Wiltshire*, 241.

88. Advert for the auction in *The Times*, 23 July 1801, and then running continually throughout the rest of July and into August.
89. *Morning Post*, 27 May 1801.
90. Joseph Farington, *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, vol. 3, ed. Kathryn Cave, Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 916. *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 2 July 1802.
91. For a detailed account of the sale see Robert Gemmett, *William Beckford's Fonthill: Architecture, Landscape and the Arts* (Croydon: Fonthill Media, 2016), 77–87.
92. *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette,* Thursday 27 August 1801.
93. *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 24 September 1801.
94. Farington, *Diary,* vol. 8, 2887–8 (entry for 16 October 1806); Douglas to Beckford, 27 November 1806, Bodleian Library, Beckford MS, c.20, fols.14-15.
95. Bodleian Library, Beckford MS, c.30, f.175.
96. Gemmett, *William Beckford's Fonthill*, chapters 7–8.
97. James Wyatt took pieces of wrought iron from the Fonthill staircase and incorporated them into his designs for the staircase that dominates the hall at Doddington Park. See John Martin Robinson, *James Wyatt: Architect to George III* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 281–5.
98. This name first given to the house on an engraving by Thomas Higham after a view by John Buckler, published by Richard Colt Hoare, January 1829.
99. January 1790, reprinted in Boyd Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son: A Study of William Beckford* (London: Centaur Press, 1962), 156–7.
100. In 1796 Joseph Farington recorded in his diary a sketch based on a drawing Wyatt had shown him for a tower at Fonthill that he had made four years before. Farington, *Diary*, vol. 2, 612.
101. Beckford to Wyatt 10 April 1794, Bodleian Library, Beckford MS, c.37, fols. 50–1.
102. The possibility that it was Wyatt who recommended Beckford should visit the monasteries is discussed by Aldrich, "William Beckford's Abbey," 118–9.
103. Beckford to Mrs Beckford, 29 November 1796, reprinted in Melville, *Life and Letters of William Beckford*, 221.
104. Beckford to Sir William Hamilton, 2 February 1797; Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, 159.
105. RIBA K8/1, 1–3. John Wilton-Ely, "Beckford the Builder," in *William Beckford*, exhibition catalogue (Wiltshire: Compton Press, 1976), 40–1.
106. In the collection of Bolton Museum and Art Gallery.
107. Ian Warrell, "William Beckford and the Rise – and Falls – of Fonthill Abbey," in *Turner's Wessex: Architecture and Ambition* (London: Scala, 2015), 78–119.
108. Beckford to Sir Isaac Heard, 21 May 1800, reprinted in Melville, *Life and Letters of William Beckford*, 225.
109. *The Gentleman's Magazine* 71, April 1801, 297.
110. Britton, *Beauties of Wiltshire*, 249.
111. West to Nicholas Williams, 5 January 1801, reprinted in Melville, *Life and Letters of William Beckford*, 238.
112. Diary of Anne Hamilton, Bodleian Library, Beckford MS, e.4, fols. 2–15.
113. *Gentleman's Magazine,* 1806, II, 1128.
114. James Storer, *A Description of Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire* (London: W. Clarke, 1812), 9.
115. Descent of Mrs Beckford from William Latimer 1st Lord Latimer, College of Arms 4 Jan 1797, Bodleian Library, Beckford MS b8. Fols. 12–13.
116. 17 October 1817, reprinted in *Life at Fonthill*, ed. Boyd Alexander (London: Hart-Davis, 1957).
117. See Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, 191 and endnote 1, 286.
118. For proposal to the Duke see Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, 190–1.
119. For both the 1822 and 1823 sales see Gemmett, *William Beckford's Fonthill*, chapters 10–11.
120. Notes on the sale of Fonthill, Bodleian Library, Beckford MS, c.30, fols. 124–5.
121. Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, 167.

## Chapter 5

1. Sir Richard Colt Hoare, *The Gentleman's Magazine,* 92, pt. 2 (October, 1822): 291, in Robert J. Gemmett, *William Beckford's Fonthill* (Croydon: Fonthill Media, 2016), 126.
2. Wiltshire History Centre, Chippenham, WRO 413/277.
3. Edward D. Ingraham (ed.), *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the English Ecclesiastical Courts* (Philadelphia: Nicklin and Johnson, 1822).
4. See Jon Millington, *William Beckford: A Bibliography* (Crockerton, Warminster: Beckford Society, 2008), 123.
5. John Timbs, *English Eccentrics* (London: Richard Bentley, 1866).

6. *The Annual Register, or, a view of the history, politics, and literature of the year 1826 (*London: Baldwick, Cradock and Joy, 1827), 267.
7. *The Times,* 7 July 1836: lists houses Farquhar owned in Stratford Place, Gloucester Place, Harley Street, Howland Street, Golden Square and Warwick Street.
8. "John Farquhar," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.*
9. *The Times,* 1 October 1822.
10. "John Farquhar," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
11. James Everard, Baron Arundell, and Sir Richard Colt Hoare, *The History of Modern Wiltshire. Hundred of Dunworth and Vale of Noddre* (London: John Bowyer Nichols and Son, 1829), Vol. IV, part I, 27.
12. Aubrey Menen, *Fonthill* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975), 47.
13. "Fonthill," *Morning Herald*, 9 September 1823, 3.
14. See Gemmett, *William Beckford's Fonthill,* 127.
15. J. P. Neale, *Graphical Illustrations of Fonthill Abbey, the Seat of John Farquhar, Esq. With an Historical Description and Notices of Works of Art Formerly Preserved There* (London: 1824), 9.
16. For full list of responses to the 1823 sale see Millington, *William Beckford: A Bibliography.*
17. Gemmett, *Beckford's Fonthill,* 141.
18. *Salisbury and Winchester Journal,* 22 September 1823.
19. Charles Knight, *Passages of a Working Life during Half a Century* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1874), 310–11.
20. John Constable to Mrs Constable, 29 August 1823, in C. R. Leslie, R.A., ed., *Memoirs of the Life of John Constable* (London: Phaidon Press, 1951), 105.
21. Leslie, *Memoirs*, 105.
22. *Devon and Wiltshire Gazette,* 9 October 1823, quoted in Robert Moody, *Mr Benett of Wiltshire: The Life of a County Member of Parliament 1773–1852* (East Knoyle: Hobnob Press, 2005), 143. Benett was to become tenant of Farquhar paying him rent of £3,663 a year.
23. Agreement dated 9 July 1819: Earl Grosvenor to pay Earl of Rosebery £71,750. Grosvenor Estate, 1049/2/ box 6, consulted at Cheshire Archives and Local Studies.
24. Sale of Manor of Gillingham 24 August 1821, Grosvenor Estate, Adds 2852/3. On 29 August 1822 the *Bath Chronicle* published a rumour that Earl Grosvenor had also bought Fonthill Abbey.
25. 'Valuation of Mr Whitaker's Estates at Motcombe by Mr John Gatehouse, 1820, £41,617.10.0 plus timber; Valuation of a capital mansion and sundry farms situate in the parish of Motcombe … belonging to the trustees of the late Wm.Whitaker Esq.' In Grosvenor Estate Adds 2852/2. 6 July 1825, first payment of £11,000 made for Motcombe estate (total £51,000), Grosvenor Estate, 729/5/4/6.
26. Richard Peyton, Cooks Court, 5 April 1825, 'Report upon an Estate at Motcombe in the County of Dorset the Property of The Right Honorable the Earl Grosvenor,' Grosvenor Estate, Adds 2852/4. Peyton found 'the Tenants are generally speaking an easy unenterprising set of people. The buildings are very old and in much decay and the land has been greatly neglected.'
27. Gervas Huxley, *Lady Elizabeth and the Grosvenors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965)*,* 32.
28. Neale, *Graphical Illustrations of Fonthill Abbey*.
29. *The Times*, 8 December 1835.
30. Ingraham, *Reports of Cases,* 121.
31. Ingraham, *Reports of Cases*, 138.
32. *The Times*, 9 October 1824.
33. Arundel and Hoare, *History of Modern Wiltshire,* 27.
34. J. C. Loudon, "Notes on Gardens and Country Seats," *The Gardener's Magazine* XI (September 1835), 441–9, cited in Robert J. Gemmett, *Beckford's Fonthill: The Rise of a Romantic Icon* (Norwich: Michael Russell, 2003), 368.
35. Gemmett, *Beckford's Fonthill,* 145, quoting Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford of Fonthill* vol. 2 (London: 1859), 258.
36. Wiltshire History Centre, WRO 413/69.
37. Mortimer's will, dated 2 July 1829, stated he had purchased the property from Farquhar, however it was 'not yet conveyed.' George Mortimer's will, 2 July 1829, National Archives: Prob 11/1814.
38. Some details of purchase can be found in Grosvenor Estate, 729/5/1.
39. Grosvenor Estate, 729/5/1 and 729/5/4 WCA 22.
40. P. M. Chitty to Farquhar, 26 February 1826: 'I hope you are improved in health since I had the pleasure of seeing you in London,' Grosvenor Estate, 729/5/1.
41. Farquhar moved from Upper Baker Street to Newland in 1823.
42. National Archives, Prob 31/1238/1398.
43. National Archives, Prob 31/1238/1398.
44. Farquhar's library was sold at Sotheby's on 1 March 1827: *Catalogue of the Entire Astronomical, Chemical, and Philosophical Library of the Late John Farquhar Esq. of Fonthill.*
45. Ingraham, *Reports of Cases*, 156.

46. Ingraham, *Reports of Cases*, 156.
47. See Moody, *Mr Benett of Wiltshire.*
48. Moody, *Mr Benett of Wiltshire*, 155.
49. Barry Williamson, *The Arundells of Wardour from Cornwall to Colditz* (East Knoyle: Hobnob Press, 2011), 149. Philip Chitty, the Shaftesbury solicitor of Earl Grosvenor and Arundell, wrote to Grosvenor on 14 September 1826 of his optimism that Lord Francis Gower might rent Wardour. This also fell through. See Grosvenor Estate, 729/1/1
50. Williamson, *The Arundells of Wardour*, 149.
51. 24 December 1827; Moody, *Mr Benett of Wiltshire*, 157.
52. Moody, *Mr Benett of Wiltshire*, 157.
53. *Salisbury and Winchester Journal,* 5570, 28 April 1828.
54. C. Clark and W. Finnelly, *Reports of Cases Heard and Decided in the House of Lords* vol. IV (London: W. T. Clark, 1849), 666–7.
55. Clark and Finnelly, *Reports of Cases*, 684.
56. 1829 sale particulars, Fonthill Estate Archives.
57. *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette,* 10 October 1826, reported the manufactory had been recently completed.
58. *The Times,* 5 October 1826.
59. John Britton, *Graphical and Literary Illustrations of Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire; with Heraldical and Genealogical Notices of the Beckford Family* (London: 1823), 32.
60. See Kenneth Rogers, "Wiltshire and Somerset Woollen Mills," *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* lxiv (1976): 81. Wiltshire Cuttings i.63. v.30; Wiltshire History Centre, Chippenham, WRO 1780 sale catalogue; the article makes reference to the *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette* of 27 October 1825, 7 May 1829, 9 July 1829, 29 April 1830.
61. *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 7 May 1829.
62. Wiltshire History Centre, Chippenham, WR 413/69.
63. Britton, *Graphical and Literary Illustrations*, 32.
64. Arundell and Hoare, *The History of Modern Wiltshire,* 28.

## Chapter 6

1. James Combes to James Morrison, 30 May 1837, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0203.
2. For further material on James Morrison, see Caroline Dakers, *A Genius for Money: Business, Art and the Morrisons* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011).
3. Philip Beresford and William D. Rubinstein, *The Richest of the Rich* (King's Lynn: Harriman House, 2007), 178.
4. See Fonthill Estate Archives A/07.
5. The surviving claimants were James Mortimer, John Fraser, Charlotte Mortimer, Mary Mortimer, Elizabeth Trezevant and Charlotte Fraser, wife of Sir William Templer Pole. James Mortimer maintained a link with Fonthill, occupying a small country house, Wyke Hall, a few miles further west into Dorset.
6. Document in Fonthill archive.
7. James Combes to Charles, eldest son of James Morrison, 19 November 1844, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0203.
8. Wyatt Papworth, *John B. Papworth, Architect to the King of Wurttemberg; A Brief Record of his Life and Works* (London: 1879), 79.
9. Papworth, *John B. Papworth*, 79.
10. Papworth, *John B. Papworth*, 139.
11. Edward Boykin (ed.), *Victoria, Albert and Mrs Stevenson* (New York and Toronto: Rinehart, 1958), 26.
12. See accounts of Snells and Seddons in Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0204.
13. James Combes to James Morrison, 2 May 1838, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0203.
14. Anonymous, *Coade's Gallery or Exhibition in Artificial Stone, Westminster Bridge Road, Specimens from the Manufactory at King's Arms Stairs Narrow-Wall Lambeth* (1799), 22, no. 37. Quoted in the sale catalogue entry for 'Polyphemus', Christie's, 5 November 2014, sale 10474, lot 100.
15. Richard Alsop, see James Combes to James Morrison, 17 January 1836, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0203.
16. John B. Papworth, *Rural Residences* (London: 1818), 21.
17. James Combes to James Morrison, 10 May 1840, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0203.
18. J. B. Papworth to James Morrison, April 1840, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0205/1.
19. James Lampard to James Morrison, 19 April 1843, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0210.
20. Notes on drawing of Fonthill Bishop school, J. B. Papworth, RIBA, 104/1.

21. Colonel Chettle, "Two Centuries of Fonthill Gifford," n.d., 16, in Wiltshire Museum, Devizes, MSS 207, box 17.
22. Boykin, *Victoria, Albert and Mrs Stevenson*, 29.
23. *The Times,* 10 December 1830.
24. John Claudius Loudon, "Notes on Gardens and Country Seats," *The Gardener's Magazine,* XI (September 1835), 441, in Robert J. Gemmett, *Beckford's Fonthill* (Norwich: Michael Russell, 2003), 362.
25. Charlotte Lansdown, *Recollections of the Late William Beckford of Fonthill, Wilts and Lansdown, Bath* (Bath: 1893), 38–48, in Gemmett, *Beckford's Fonthill,* 374.
26. James Combes to James Morrison, 14 March 1832, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0203.
27. John B. Nichols, *Historical Notices of Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire* (London: 1836), 39.
28. John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey* (Shaftesbury: J. Rutter, 1823), 39
29. Charles Morrison to James Morrison [1835] Fonthill Estate Archives.
30. J. C. Loudon, "Notes on Gardens and Country Seats," in Robert J. Gemmett, *Beckford's Fonthill,* 364–7.
31. Robert Moody, *Mr Benett of Wiltshire: The Life of a County Member of Parliament 1773–1852* (East Knoyle: Hobnob Press, 2005), 256.
32. James Combes to James Morrison, 20 March 1838, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0203.
33. James Morrison to John Benett, 7 July 1838, Wiltshire History Centre, Chippenham, 413/69.
34. See Chippenham 413/69.
35. James Combes to James Morrison, 31 December 1838, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0203.
36. Charles Morrison to James Morrison, 9 October 1840, Fonthill Estate Archives, B/04/0872. 'I have read your & S's financial statements & plans, but am not able to understand them in every part – principally because I do not know in what position you stand, or what arrangements you propose to make with respect to 2 formidable items, the payt of the balc of the Basildon purchase money, & the £123,000 Over [Overend and Gurney] bills. I shall therefore say nothg on that head.'
37. 28 May 1838 contract between Marquess of Westminster and James Morrison; deeds of sale of Berwick St Leonard dated 20 January 1844 and 7 August 1845, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/08/0235-7.
38. James Combes to James Morrison, 25 March 1838, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0203.
39. James Combes to James Morrison, 20 May 1837, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0203.
40. Mabel Morrison, *The Quest of Joy* (London: Faber), n.d. [ca. 1937], 18.
41. Charlotte Lansdown, in Robert J. Gemmett, *Beckford's Fonthill,* 372.
42. Gervas Huxley, *Lady Elizabeth and the Grosvenors* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 12.
43. Huxley, *Lady Elizabeth and the Grosvenors*, 52.
44. Huxley, *Lady Elizabeth and the Grosvenors*, 54.
45. Motcombe builder Uriah Maskell was awarded the contract to build a new church in 1846; when he died in 1867 he left over £9,000; see Laurence Clark, *A Motcombe Miscellany* (East Knoyle: Hobnob Press, 2012), 95–6.
46. Clark, A *Motcombe Miscellany,* 106–7.
47. John Benett to unnamed correspondent, n.d. [1844], Wiltshire History Centre, Chippenham, 413/69.
48. John Benett to John Parkinson, 22 August [1844], Wiltshire History Centre, Chippenham, 413/69.
49. John Benett to John Parkinson, n.d. [1844], Wiltshire History Centre, Chippenham, 413/69.
50. James Combes to James Morrison, 20 February 1845, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0203. The sale was the only good news for Benett at the time. His eldest son and heir had become a Roman Catholic and died on 26 December 1844; his daughter died less than a month later.
51. Wiltshire History Centre, Chippenham, 413/376.
52. Huxley, *Lady Elizabeth and the Grosvenors*, 162.
53. James Combes to James Morrison, 27 March 1845, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0203: 'The marquis' solicitor has apply'd for an answer to his question the other day viz. whether you are disposed to part with Berwick and Hindon.'
54. James Combes to James Morrison, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0203.
55. Philip Chitty to James Morrison, 1845, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/08/0235-7.
56. Beresford and Rubinstein, *The Richest of the Rich*, 133.
57. J. V. Beckett, *The Aristocracy in England 1660–1914* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 282.
58. James Morrison eventually owned over 100,000 acres, including estates at Fonthill, Basildon, Malham, Hole Park, Islay and Cholsey.
59. See Dakers, *A Genius for Money.*
60. David Brandon to James Morrison, 16 May 1846, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/09/0333: 'to inspect the church at Basildon'.
61. See Michael Darby, "Owen Jones and the Eastern Ideal," Ph.D. diss., University of Reading, 1974, 158.
62. Owen Jones to James Morrison, 23 January, 30 January 1845, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/7/0214.
63. Owen Jones, 'Dairy, Fonthill', no. 1705, International Exhibition, London, 1862.
64. John Martin Robinson, *The Wyatts: An Architectural Dynasty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 204.
65. See A.174, Prints and Drawings Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum.

66. James Combes to James Morrison, 28 June 1846, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0203.
67. James Combes to James Morrison, 19 July 1846, Fonthill Estate Archives, A07/0203.
68. Rev. W. Coxe Radcliffe to James Morrison, 1 March 1847, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0211.
69. See letters between James Combes, James Combes Junior, David Brandon and James Morrison for details of the progress of the building, all in the Fonthill Estate Archives.
70. David Brandon to James Morrison, 17 September 1849, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/09/0333.
71. 23 November 1850 settlement to include 'pictures prints statues maps books jewels coins medals articles of virtu plate china glass and other household goods and furniture now in or about … Fonthill,' Fonthill Estate Archives. No inventory was made at the time, but Alfred certainly acquired two of his father's paintings, Van Dyck's *Queen Henrietta Maria* and Rembrandt's *Jewish Rabbi*, later included in Alfred's own inventory of heirlooms, Fonthill Estate Archives, M/2/1401.
72. Emily Grant to Mary Ann Morrison, 14 December 1850. Fonthill Estate Archives, H/01/1244.
73. David Brandon to James Morrison, 18 August 1846, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/09/0333.
74. James Combes to James Morrison, 22 May 1846, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0203.
75. Huxley, *Lady Elizabeth and the Grosvenors,* 14. Anthony Trollope could well have been thinking of the Marquess of Westminster in his depiction of Mr Palliser (nephew of the Duke of Omnium) in his six 'Palliser' or 'Political' novels published between 1864 and 1880.
76. Huxley, *Lady Elizabeth and the Grosvenors,* 15.
77. Huxley, *Lady Elizabeth and the Grosvenors,* 20.
78. Diary of the Marchioness of Westminster, 16 April 1846, private collection in Somerset.
79. James Combes to James Morrison, 7 May 1846, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0203.
80. Mark Girouard, *The Victorian Country House* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 22.
81. Nesfield was so busy he could only manage one visit to James Morrison at Basildon in 1846. See Fonthill Estate Archives, A/09/0936.
82. Diary of the Marquess of Westminster, 14 April 1848: 'We walked to the Stone Sculptor Mr Raymond Smith in the New Road & Home'; 8 March 1853: 'met Mr Nesfield at Raymond Smith's'. Private collection in Somerset.
83. N. Antonetti, "William Andrews Nesfield and the Origins of the Landscape Architect," *Landscape History* 33 (2012).
84. Diary of Marquess of Westminster, 13 January 1847, private collection in Somerset.
85. W. Coxe Radcliffe, Rector of Fonthill Gifford, to James Morrison, 1 March 1847, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/07/0211.
86. Mark Girouard, *The Victorian Country House*, 32.
87. James Combes Junior to James Morrison, 27 September 184: 'The Stalbridge estate and another … is not yet disposed of – Ld Westminster has been nibbling at them for some time, but from what I can learn he is now lying off.' The Stalbridge estate was conveyed to the Marquess of Westminster on 10 October 1854. Dorset History Centre, Dorchester, RO D/484/15.
88. Lady Theodora Grosvenor, *Motcombe Past and Present* (Shaftesbury: 1867), 92.
89. Diary of Marquess of Westminster, 1 September 1855: 'brought from Mr [Fuonis] a pasteboard model of Fonthill given to us by Mrs Whieldon'. Private collection in Somerset. This is the model acquired by John Benett when he bought the Abbey estate and included in his inventory of 1852. Presumably it was then acquired by Mrs Wheildon of Wyke Hall, Gillingham. Her first husband was James Farquhar, nephew of John Farquhar; Wyke Hall had been renovated by James Farquhar and the Farquhar coat of arms displayed inside and out.
90. Diary of Marquess of Westminster, 6 March 1857, private collection in Somerset.
91. Diary of Marchioness of Westminster, 6 March 1857, private collection in Somerset.
92. Diary of Marchioness of Westminster, 11 March 1857, private collection in Somerset.
93. *The Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener,* 26 July 1888.
94. Diary of Marchioness of Grosvenor, 27 April 57, private collection in Somerset.
95. The giant sequoia, or Wellingtonia (named after the lst Duke of Wellington). The seeds were first brought to England in 1853.
96. Jill Allibone, *George Devey* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 1991), 25.
97. Diary of Marchioness of Westminster, 27 April 1857, private collection in Somerset.
98. "Selim." "Two Cottages Dwellings for Labourers, Under One Roof," in *Encyclopedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture* vol. 1, ed. J. C. Loudon (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green & Longman), 1846, 184–5. Selim also contributed a design for the restoration of the manor house at Berwick St Leonard. This would wait for the attention of Hugh Morrison and Detmar Blow 60 years later, see Chapters 7 and 18 in this volume.
99. Information from Camilla Beresford and David Mason, *Durability Guaranteed Pulhamite Rockwork – its Conservation and Repair,* ed. John D. Stewart and Jennifer White, 7 January 2008, https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/durability-guaranteed-pulhamite-rockwork/.
100. Diary of Marquess of Westminster, private collection in Somerset. On 30 April 1860 the Marquess wrote 'Ly W went in the Phaeton … to Fonthill to meet Mr Pulham about rockery work for the American Garden. I rode over & Thinned Trees'. On 16 April 1862 'we met Mr Pulham to arrange the rockery & works'.

101. James Pulham, *Picturesque Ferneries and Rock-Garden Scenery* (London: ca. 1877).
102. Diary of Marquess of Westminster, 11,12 September 1862, private collection in Somerset.
103. Diary of Marquess of Westminster, 23 June, 25 and 27 September 1862, private collection in Somerset. The urns are listed, but the description is vague, suggesting they were bought at the Paris International Exhibitions of 1855 or 1867. The diaries suggest the 1862 International Exhibition in London is a more likely source.
104. Grosvenor Papers, 1049/2/3/53.
105. Diary of Marquess of Westminster, 18 August 1865, private collection in Somerset.
106. See Christie's sales 27 May and 23 September 2010. But they are more likely to have been bought at the 1862 International Exhibition than the 1851 Great Exhibition (before the new Abbey was built).
107. Diary of Marchioness of Westminster, 15 July 1865, private collection in Somerset.
108. Diary of Marquess of Westminster, 14 September 1863: 'settled to rebuild church at Fonthill – Ly W went to see Mr Ratcliffe about it'. Private collection in Somerset.
109. James Everard, Baron Arundell, and Sir Richard Colt Hoare, *The History of Modern Wiltshire. Hundred of Dunworth and Vale of Noddre* (London: John Bowyer Nichols and Son, 1829), 22.
110. *The Builder*, 14 August 1880, quoted in Robinson, *The Wyatts*, 218.
111. Robinson, *The Wyatts*, 218.
112. Robinson, *The Wyatts*, 225.
113. Diary of Marquess of Westminster, private collection in Somerset.
114. 'The improvements which have been carried out in the gardens and grounds [of Fonthill Abbey] during the interval from the year 1865 – 1881 testify to the skill and ability of the late gardener Mr Annandale,' *Journal of Horticulture*, 26 July 1888.
115. Grosvenor Papers, 1049/6/8.
116. Hugh, born 1825, married 1852 to his first cousin Lady Constance Leveson-Gower, in the presence of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert; Eleanor, born 1820, married 1842 Lord Prudhoe, who became Duke of Northumberland; Mary, born 1821, married 1842 Lord Parker, who became Earl of Macclesfield; Elizabeth, born 1824, married 1846 Richard Lawley to become Baron Wenlock; Caroline, born 1828, married 1848 William Leigh, to become Baron Leigh; Octavia, born 1829, married 1852 Sir Michael Shaw Stewart; Agnes, born 1831, married 1858 Sir Archibald Campbell – he died 1866 – she then married a doctor, Philip Frank, in 1871; Jane, born 1834, married 1855 Baron Muncaster – he died 1862 – she then married Hugh Lindsay in 1863.
117. Diary of Lady Theodora Grosvenor, 29 April 1867, private collection in Somerset: '[to] the Old Castle [Wardour] got off & inspected it thoroughly (with a view to the Gentleman's Mag)'.
118. Diary of Lady Theodora Grosvenor, 13 August 1867, private collection in Somerset.
119. The 3rd Marquess, the future Duke of Westminster, had an income of £37,000 a year from country property and £115,000 from London. He carried on the work of his father – at Eaton building 48 farmhouses, 360 cottages, 8 schools, 7 village halls and 3 churches. See Girouard, *The Victorian Country House*, 1.
120. Fonthill Archive, F/1/1100. The property was made up as follows: Fonthill estate £157,690; Porton estate £16,380; additional inheritance from James Morrison £245,000; Chesapeake and Delaware Railway Shares £10,227; Philadelphia City Loan shares £20,986; Delaware Division Canal Bank shares £16,363.
121. For further details of Alfred Morrison's collection see Caroline Dakers, *A Genius for Money*. By coincidence, the Marquess of Westminster's youngest son, Richard de Aquila Grosvenor, witnessed the burning of the Summer Palace in 1860.
122. For further information on Owen Jones, Jackson and Graham see Clive Edwards, "The firm of Jackson and Graham," *Furniture History* XXXIV (1998): 238–65.
123. See 'estimate of account' in Fonthill Estate Archives, total £4,232, F/2/1121.
124. Diary of Lady Theodora Grosvenor, 28 August 1864, private collection in Somerset.
125. Receipt from Jackson and Graham for £2,500 dated 10 July 1868, presumably for London work, Fonthill Estate Archives, F/2/1121.
126. Girouard, *The Victorian Country House*, 53.
127. Walter Hindes Godfry, "George Devey FRIBA," *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* (19 September 1906): 516.
128. For all Devey drawings relating to Fonthill see RIBA PB 809/DEV [49] 1–11.
129. Devey invoice, December 1864, Fonthill Estate Archives F/2/1121.
130. Fonthill Estate Archives F/2/1121.
131. Account book of George Devey, RIBA Prints and Drawings, DeG/1/1.
132. Diary of Lady Theodora Grosvenor, 2 September 1866 and 10 September 1866, private collection in Somerset.
133. W. W. G., "Wiltshire Downs and Down Farming," in "Scrapbook of Agricultural Press-cuttings 1882–1883," Fonthill Estate Archives.
134. Madeline Wyndham to Mary, Lady Elcho, 22 October 1885, Stanway Estate Papers.

135. Caroline Dakers, *Clouds: The Biography of a Country House (*London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 72.
136. Diary of Lady Theodora Grosvenor, 18 November 1869, private collection in Somerset.
137. See Caroline Dakers, "George Aitchison 1825–1910: An Overview," in *George Aitchison: Leighton's Architect Revealed* (London: Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, 2011), 20–1.
138. *The Builder,* 11 May 1872.
139. His first wife (married 1874) was Beatrice Vesey, youngest daughter of the 3rd Viscount de Vesci of Abbey Leix; his second (1879) was Eleanor Hamilton-Stubbs, a neighbour of the Vescis in Moyne.
140. The Marchioness of Westminster to Robert Annandale, 15 May 1874, Dorset History Centre, Dorchester, D1452/1.
141. Diary of Lady Theodora Grosvenor, 13 August 1874, private collection in Somerset. Disraeli visited the Marchioness again in 1878 at Barcote.
142. Lady Theodora Grosvenor laid the foundation stone on 25 May 1871.
143. *The Architect,* 12 November 1879, 267, in Robinson, *The Wyatts*, 226.
144. Diary of Marchioness of Westminster, 30 August 1875, private collection in Somerset.
145. 9 November 1876, entry in the journal of Lady Layard, http://www.browningguide.org/browningscircle.php – complete journal in British Library.
146. Huxley, *Lady Elizabeth and the Grosvenors*, 169.
147. The Marchioness of Westminster to Robert Annandale, 22 January 1877, Dorset History Centre, Dorchester, D/1452.1.

## Chapter 7

1. Grosvenor Estate, 1049/2/3/53 (papers consulted at the Cheshire Archives and Local Studies).
2. Laurence Clark, *A Motcombe Miscellany* (East Knoyle: Hobnob Press, 2012), 8.
3. Journal of Lady Layard, 14 October 1892, http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/book/lookupid?key=olbp44302.
4. Elspeth Huxley, *Nellie: Letters from Africa* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), 9.
5. George Aitchison, "Untitled," *Builders' Journal* (24 June 1896), 317.
6. Hilary J. Grainger, *The Architecture of Sir Ernest George* (Reading: Spire, 2011), 190.
7. Hermann Muthesius, *The English House* (St Albans: Granta Publishing, 1979), 90. The old house was demolished and the materials used by George Prideaux for his new house in Motcombe – see Huxley, *Nellie*, 19.
8. Mortgage agreement dated 18 January 1894, Grosvenor Estate, ADDS 2576/6.
9. Huxley, *Nellie*, 20.
10. In 1894 the property comprised Stalbridge (4,769 acres and a rental income of £9,363); Motcombe (8,835 acres and a rental income of £15,363); and Shaftesbury (rent £4,492). Grosvenor Estate, ADDS 2576/6.
11. Lady Alice's aunt was Beatrice Vesey, the first wife of Richard Baron Stalbridge. Stalbridge was Lady Octavia Shaw Stewart's brother.
12. Silver-gilt trays and tazza, sold Woolley and Wallis, Salisbury, 27 January 2010; late sixteenth-century Flemish school, *The Knight of the Golden Fleece*, sold Christie's, 6 July 2010; Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *Lady and her Maid Chastising a Spaniel*, sold Christie's, 6 July 2010; Bellini, *Madonna and Child*, sold Sotheby's, 7 December 1927, now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York; Jan van Huysum, *Still Life with Flowers*, sold Sotheby's, London, 7 December 1927, on loan to Dulwich Picture Gallery.
13. Murillo, *The Vision of Saint Anthony of Padua*, sold Christie's, 7 December 2010, lot 196, as 'studio of Murillo', and Giovanni Bellini, *The Madonna and Child in a Landscape*, bought by Agnews from the Dudley sale, sold to Sir Michael Shaw Stewart for 1,100 guineas, sold Christie's, 6 July 2010, for £3,513,250.
14. See Christopher L. Maxwell, "The Dispersal of the Hamilton Palace collection" (Ph.D. diss., University of Glasgow, 2014).
15. In the 1911 census her unmarried son Archibald was staying at Fonthill Abbey.
16. At Wardour, the 12th Lord Arundell died in 1906 without an heir. His widow was left the estate for her lifetime. A cousin, Gerald Arundell, was named as heir and lived with his wife in the east wing, unable to prevent the Dowager making erratic decisions about the estate up to her death in 1934. Wardour never recovered: most of the estate was sold in 1946, the New Wardour Castle was sold to the Jesuits in 1947 and most of the contents of New Wardour Castle were sold in 1948. At Pythouse, Vere Fane Benett died in 1894, a few years after taking out a mortgage of £104,000 to pay for extensions to the house, a yacht and an estate in Madeira. He left the estate to his widow who lived until 1932. She married again and moved out in 1905 but their son Jack Benett was not legally recognised as owner of the property until 1938. He died in 1947, his widow in 1957, when the mansion was sold to the Mutual Houses Association and converted into apartments.
17. Huxley, *Nellie*, 26–7.

18. Among his purchases was an exquisite rock-crystal vase once owned by Rubens, and now in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.
19. Entry in diary of Hugh Morrison, 22 December 1897, Fonthill Estate Archives, M/01/1379.
20. Unidentified source, in scrapbook of obituaries kept by Hugh Morrison, Fonthill Estate Archives, M/01/1385.
21. Will of Alfred Morrison, Fonthill Estate Archives, F/05/1179.
22. Fonthill Estate Archives, M/2/1415.
23. Colonel Benett Stanford of Pythouse, "Notes for History of Fonthill," Wiltshire Museum, Devizes, MSS 207, box 17.
24. Colonel Benett Stanford, Wiltshire Museum, Devizes, MSS 207, box 17.
25. E.O.G., "Notable Personalities. The Late Charles Morrison," *The Agricultural and Horticultural Review,* August 1909.
26. Hugh's brother Archie Morrison was left Basildon and the art collection of James Morrison, also £270,000 trust legacy to provide him with an income to live at Basildon, an agricultural estate at Cholsey and leases on London commercial properties.
27. *The Builder,* 6 February 1914.
28. Reg Harris, "Memoirs," deposited in Fonthill Estate Archives.
29. Lady Mary Morrison to Hugh, 24 June 1909, N/01, Fonthill Estate Archives.
30. Mabel to Hugh Morrison, 6 June 1909, G/01, Fonthill Estate Archives.
31. Mabel eventually bought Shawford House near Winchester, a large country house dating from the late seventeenth century, with 60 acres and a model farm. In 1923 she downsized to Littleden, Highcliffe-on-Sea, an eight-bedroom house. She died in 1934. Fonthill Estate Archives, G/1/1202; G/1/1212; G/1/1209.
32. Caroline Dakers, *Forever England: The Countryside at War 1914–1918* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016), 200.
33. Lord Margadale to Peter Walker, Secretary of State for the Environment, 12 June 1972. Fonthill Estate Archives, S/7/1926.
34. Newspaper cutting from the *Salisbury and Wiltshire Journal,* 3 April 1915, in Fonthill Estate Archives.
35. M/21418, Fonthill Estate Archives.
36. Newspaper article, 21 July 1921, in *Wiltshire Cuttings* 16, 192, Wiltshire Museum, Devizes.
37. Huxley, *Nellie*, 3.
38. Grosvenor Estate, ADDS 2576/9.
39. When the house was acquired by Dorset County Council for Shaftesbury School, the Owen Jones pieces were sold through Sotheby's.
40. Cecil Beaton, *Ashcombe: The Story of a Fifteen-year Lease* (Wimborne: Dovecote Press, 1999), 6.
41. Viscount Hambleden was another patron of Detmar Blow, commissioning North Bovey House on Dartmoor.
42. Christie's, 19 March 1936, *Fine Chinese Enamelled Porcelain*; 7 May 1936, *Fine French and English Furniture*; 8 December 1938, *Porcelain and Objects of Art*.
43. At university, 'in spite of every influence exerted by his family, he could not be helped to a degree. He spent far too much time on sport, and far too much of his allowance on fox-hunting' – Patrick Cosgrave, "Obituary of Lord Margadale," *The Guardian*, 29 May 1996.
44. Fonthill Estate Archives, A/080269.
45. James Morrison's agent James Combes wrote to him on 8 April 1838: 'I always suspected the place was built above Hindon by Mr Beckford and I dare say such was the fact, and now it is finished and fit for occupation it is to be sold – the valet is not dead but says he does not like the place.' Fonthill Estate Archives, A/7/0203.
46. Fonthill Estate Archives, A/8/0293.
47. Sotheby's, 7 December 1927.
48. See Maxwell, "Dispersal of the Hamilton Palace Collection."
49. Conveyance of Motcombe estate, 19 November 1925, Grosvenor Estate, Adds 2576/12; Dorset History Centre, Dorchester, D-HDS/SP/125/40.
50. Sale particulars, 14 March 1929, Dorset History Centre, Dorchester, D/484/13/7.
51. Clark, *Motcombe Miscellany*, 73.
52. See reports in *The Times*, 13 July 1936 and 14 July 1936.
53. Fonthill Estate Archives, S/24/2517.
54. John Harris, *No Voice From the Hall: Early Memories of a Country House Snooper* (London: John Murray, 1998), 4.
55. See Fonthill Women's Institute History, S/24/2523, Fonthill Estate Archives; Rex Sawyer (nadderstories), "Tisbury at War," BBC WW2 People's War. Contributed on 14 April 2005, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/97/a3895897.shtml.
56. Patrick Cosgrave, "Obituary of Lord Margadale," *The Guardian*, 29 May 1996.
57. Will of May Beatrice Shaw Stewart.
58. A/08/0241 and further material from the Fonthill Estate Archives unless otherwise cited.
59. J. G. Morrison to G. N. Rawlence, 5 September 1946, Fonthill Estate Archives.
60. J. G. Morrison to G. N. Rawlence, 24 September 1946, Fonthill Estate Archives.

61. April 1947 agreement, Fonthill Estate Archives, S/17/2139.
62. Stephen Scammell, report to G. N. Rawlence on the options proposed by Imrie, 31 March 1947, Fonthill Estate Archives.
63. H. W. Pook to Rawlence & Squarey, 18 November 1940, Fonthill Estate Archives, S/17/2140.
64. Fonthill Estate Archives, S/17/2140.
65. Bothams & Brown to Sir Dawson Bates, 25 June 1953, Fonthill Estate Archives, S/17/2140.
66. Fonthill Estate Archives, A/08/0269.
67. Giles Worsley, *England's Lost Houses* (London: Aurum, 2002), 19.
68. Letter with illegible signature regarding Hays House, to Mr Cox, Fonthill Estate Office, 21 June 1956, Fonthill Estate Archives S/17/2140.
69. Cosgrave, "Obituary."
70. Cosgrave, "Obituary."
71. Christie's: 31 May 1965, *Chinese 18th and 19th Century Porcelain*; 2 July 1965, *Important Pictures by Old Masters*; 12 July 1965, *Fine Arms and Armour*; 23 July 1965, *The Collection of Coins and Medals (Part 1) formed by the Late Alfred Morrison Esq. Sold by Order of his Grandson The Right Honourable The Lord Margadale of Islay, T.D. removed from Fonthill House*; 1 October 1965, *Ethnographica, Antiquities and Islamic Pottery*; 1 March 1966; 1 May 1966, *Objects of Art Important French and Other Continental Furniture Tapestries, Rugs and Carpets*; 4 April 1967, *Coins and Medals.*
72. J. Mordaunt Crook, "Review of Giles Worsley, *England's Lost Houses* (London: Aurum, 2002)," *The Times Literary Supplement* (21 June 2002): 20.
73. 27 November 1970, Fonthill Estate Archives, S/11/2018.
74. 27 November 1970, Fonthill Estate Archives, S/11/2018.
75. Fonthill Estate Archives, S/7/1926.
76. Fonthill Estate Archives, S/7/1927.
77. Fonthill Estate Archives, S/7/1926.
78. G. F. McDonic to Lord Margadale, 9 June 1971, Fonthill Estate Archives, S/7/1927.
79. "How Fonthill was Missed," *The Times Diary,* 12 June 1972.
80. Trenwith Wills to Lord Margadale, 25 November 1971, Fonthill Estate Archives S/7/1926.
81. In the opinion of Michael Drury; see Chapter 18 in this volume.
82. Young, "How Fonthill was Missed."
83. Also see Lord Margadale to Stephen Weeks: 'The house contained 125 rooms and was totally uneconomic to run,' 4 April 1972, Fonthill Estate Archives, S/7/1926.
84. Lord Margadale to David, Earl of Perth, 20 November 1972, Fonthill Estate Archives, S/7/1926.
85. Other sales at Christie's in 1971 were 22 June 1971, *Important Old Master Engravings, Etchings and Lithographs*; 25 June 1971, *Highly Important Pictures by Old Masters*; 18 October 1971, *The Collection of Chinese Enamelled Porcelain, Cloisonne and Canton Enamels and a Jade Brush Pot formed by the late Alfred Morrison, Esq.* which totalled £76,920; 10 November 1971, *Dolls, Toys, Automata, Costume, Lace and Textiles*; 16 November 1971, *Japanese Swords, Sword Fittings, Prints and other Works of Art*; 19 November 1971, *Fine Pictures by Old Masters*; 23 November 1971, *Commemorative Medals, Orders and Decorations*; 26 November 1971, *Important Pictures by Old Masters*; 30 November 1971, *Fine Gold Boxes and Works of Art*; 7 December 1971, *African, Oceanic and American Indian Art, Classical, Egyptian and Western Asiatic Antiquities and Ancient Jewellery*; 10 December 1971, *Fine English Pictures c.1700–c.1850*; 15 December 1971, *Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures.*
86. John Cornforth, *The Inspiration of the Past* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 85.

## Chapter 8

1. Roy Strong, *The Roy Strong Diaries* (London: Phoenix, 1998), 141.
2. Ruth Adams, "The V&A, the Destruction of the Country House and the creation of 'English Heritage'," *Museum and Society* 11, no. 1, March 2013, 7.
3. Adams, *The V&A*, 7.
4. Strong, *The Roy Strong Diaries*, 141.
5. "Demolition," *The Observer*, 13 October 1974.
6. Giles Worsley, *England's Lost Houses* (London, Aurum: 2002), 172.
7. John Martin Robinson, *The Last Country Houses* (London: Bodley Head, 1984), 73.
8. Fonthill Estate Archives, S/7/1927.
9. Simonne Wills sent elevations of the new house to Lady Margadale on 16 January 1973; S/7/1929.
10. Alison and Peter Smithson, *Upper Lawn Solar Pavilion Folly* (Barcelona, 1986), 28. See also Dirk van den Heuvel and Max Risselada, "Building of the Month August 2004: Alison and Peter Smithson's Upper

Lawn Pavilion." Twentieth Century Society, accessed 12 January 2018. https://c20society.org.uk/botm/alison-peter-smithsons-upper-lawn-pavilion.
11. Conveyance dated 3 August 1977, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/08/0241.
12. See Erica Brown, "For a Victorian Spirit, A Serendipitous Collection," *New York Times*, 10 February 1983, http://www.nytimes.com/1983/02/10/garden/for-a-victorian-spirit-a-serendipitous-collection.htm. Information also from Anna Buruma, archivist of Liberty London.
13. Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country* (Oxford: Verso: 2009), 2.
14. John Martin Robinson in *The Aristocracy: Survival of the Fittest,* BBC television, 19 February 1997.
15. J. Mordaunt Crook, "Review of Giles Worsley, *England's Lost Houses,*" in *The Times Literary Supplement* (21 June 2002): 20.
16. Alastair Morrison, 3rd Lord Margadale, pers. comms., 2017.
17. Stephen and Benetta Morant, pers. comms., 2017. Fanny Nisbet was the first wife of Horatio Nelson, who visited Fonthill Abbey in 1800, but not with Fanny; he was accompanying his mistress Emma Hamilton and her husband Sir William Hamilton.
18. François Pinault, founder of the luxury goods company PPR, which includes Gucci, bought the West House in 2011 for £20 million.

## Chapter 9

1. PASt Landscapes is a collaborative research project based at Salisbury Museum, which aims to understand south-west Wiltshire in the later prehistoric and Roman periods.

## Chapter 10

1. Robert J. Gemmett, *Beckford's Fonthill: The Rise of a Romantic Icon* (Norwich: Michael Russell (Publishing) Ltd, 2003), 92.
2. Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: Milford, 1918). 'Pied Beauty'.
3. Isobel Geddes, "The Landscape's Rock Foundations," *Journal of the Bath Geological Society* 31 (2012): 22.
4. The Journal of Elizabeth Hervey, Stafford Record Office D6584/C Journal 21 July 4 1797: 'a new terrace, a very bleak spot in my opinion, nor can think it will be tolerable 'til the plantations have at least 30 years growth.'
5. Ploughland is not a term used with great precision, referring as it does to the amount of land that could be ploughed in a season by a team of oxen, six to eight in number. That has been taken to amount to somewhere about 120 acres (see *Oxford English Dictionary*; under Carucate). It is not an exact term of measurement and relates to tax assessment rather than surveying. For a discussion about ploughlands in this part of England see "Introduction to the Somerset Domesday," *A History of the County of Somerset: Volume 1* (1906), 383–432. Accessed 2 July 2014, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=117314. Clearly, the measurement could not be exact since it would depend on ground conditions, and the quality of the plough team.
6. Thomas Tusser, *A Hundreth Good Pointes of Husbandrie* (London: n.p., 1557); Thomas Tusser, *Five Hundred Pointes of Good Husbandrie* (London: n.p., 1573).
7. Quite apart from any religious observance, under the so-called Cecil's Fast, an Act of 1563 to 'increase the Navy and fishing', it became an offence not to eat fish on Wednesdays, Fridays or during Lent. People living away from coastal areas were not exempt and so had to rely on fish ponds for the supply of the necessary fish.
8. Public Record Office SP 14/192 ff 107-9; see also Jane Freeman and Janet H. Stevenson, "Parishes: Fonthill Gifford," in *A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume XIII, South-West Wiltshire: Chalke and Dunworth Hundreds*, ed. D. A. Crowley (London: Victoria County History, 1987). http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/wilts/vol13/pp155-169.
9. For a fuller discussion of this topic see Margaret Willes, *The Making of the English Gardener: Plants, Books and Inspiration. 1560–1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).
10. Christopher Michael Woolgar, Dale Sergeantson and Tony Waldron, *Food in Medieval England: Diet and Nutrition* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
11. Roy Strong, *Feast: A History of Grand Eating* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002).
12. Like many terms the meaning of a 'coronary garden' has enlarged over time. Originally it was a place for the growing of plants to make wreaths and victor's crowns, hence the name. At some stage it came to describe a place for the growing of flowers suitable for the making of garlands. By the seventeenth century it had come to mean a place for the growing of special plants, including valuable recent introductions of a kind that one might not wish the general run of visitors to see (or have the opportunity to pinch).

13. Now published as John Evelyn, *Elysium Britannicum, or the Royal Gardens*, ed. John E. Ingram (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).
14. Edward Pocock, a churchman, became professor of Arabic at Oxford University. He was chaplain to the English merchants in Aleppo from 1630–5 and returned to the Near East for three years in 1637, basing himself in Constantinople.
15. These measurements have been carried out by Roy Wilde and they lead him to suggest a likely planting date of 1639. It is evident that, in any event, there was the planting of *Cedrus libani* at Fonthill in the second half of the eighteenth century, as was the fashion of the day.
16. John Phibbs, *Place-Making: The Art of Capability Brown* (Swindon: Historic England, 2017), 104.
17. Perry Gauci, *William Beckford: First Prime Minister of the London Empire* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), chapter 6.
18. Boyd Alexander, *The Journal of William Beckford in Portugal and Spain 1787–1788* (Stroud: Nonsuch Publishing Ltd., 1954, reprinted 2006), 72.
19. Sir Richard Colt Hoare, *The History of Modern Wiltshire. Hundred of Mere,* Vol. II (1822): 63.
20. Jean Huber (1721–86), soldier, artist and confidant of Voltaire at Ferney, became a father figure for Beckford during his stay in Geneva. He and his two sons, François (1750–1831), an artist, and Jean-Daniel (1754–1845), an authority on the honey-bee, were dedicated naturalists.
21. Timothy Mowl, *William Beckford: Composing for Mozart* (London: John Murray, 1998), 133.
22. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. Peter France (London: Penguin Classics, 2004. First published 1782).
23. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or La Nouvelle Heloise*, trans. Judith H. McDowell (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987). 'I thought I saw the wildest, the most solitary place in nature' ... 'It is true', she said, 'that nature has done everything, but under my direction and there is nothing here that I have not ordered ...' Book IV, Letter XI.
24. Gerald Luckhurst, "Monserrate, an English Landscape Garden in Portugal 1790–1901," Ph.D. diss., University Of Bristol, 2015. http://uk.bl.ethos.684645.
25. Literally a 'Friesian horse'. The people of Friesland, having few horses themselves, created portable barriers with wooden spikes to defend themselves against cavalry.
26. "An Account of the Works Now Executing at Fonthill," *The European Magazine and London Review*, 1797, 104.
27. William Bankes, "William Bankes' Account of His Surreptitious Visit to Fonthill," *Beckford Journal* 1 (1995). First published 1811.
28. From the Journal of Elizabeth Hervey (Beckford's step-sister), Stafford Record Office C 6584 Journal 22, 28 July 1797.
29. It appears that in the early stages of the construction of the Abbey some visitors would not be allowed to see the building work. Stafford Record Office C 6584 Journal 22, 1 August 1797.
30. It is said that from Stop Beacon, with a glass, both Exeter Cathedral and the Isle of Wight can be seen.
31. Paulus Potter (1625–54), a Dutch painter and etcher celebrated for his paintings of animals within landscapes. Meister's reference to his work suggests that there were quite a number of grazing animals to be seen on his tour.
32. Henry Meister, *Letters Written During a Residence in England* (London: Longman, 1799), 302.
33. A fever recurring every three days, usually associated with malaria but here just an example of Beckford's literary embroidery.
34. Alexander, *Life at Fonthill 1807–1822*, 38: Beckford to Douglas, 18 July 1807.
35. Michael Symes, "The Many Faces of the Landscape Garden," in *The English Landscape Garden in Europe*. (Swindon: Historic England, 2016).
36. Historic England Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, entry 1000322.
37. Fiona Cowell, *Richard Woods (1715–1793), Master of the Pleasure Garden* (Martlesham: Boydell Press, 2010).
38. Alexander, *Life at Fonthill 1807–1822,* 32. Beckford to Franchi (his secretary), 2 October 1807.
39. Alexander, *Life at Fonthill 1807–1822*, 172. Beckford to Franchi, 25 November 1816.
40. Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting* (London: n.p., 1798).
41. Alexander, *Life at Fonthill 1807–1822*, 109. Beckford to Franchi 17 June 1812.
42. Alexander, *Life at Fonthill 1807–1822*, 82. Beckford to Franchi 6 July 1810.
43. Alexander, *Life at Fonthill 1807–1822*, 81. Beckford to Franchi 22 June 1810.
44. For a fuller discussion of Beckford's planting at the Abbey see Kazuhiko Yamaguchi, "The Fonthill Legend: William Beckford's Landscape Architecture," *Shinshu University Journal of Educational Research* 6 (2000): 97–113.
45. Journal of Elizabeth Hervey, Stafford Record Office C 6584, 1797.
46. Laurent Châtel, *William Beckford; The Elusive Orientalist* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2016), 19
47. Min Wood, "Landscape as Biography," *Beckford Journal* 16 (2010).

48. J. Sidney Taylor, *Morning Chronicle*, 15 September 1823, reproduced in Robert J. Gemmett, *William Beckford's Fonthill; Architecture, Landscape and the Arts* (Fonthill Media, 2016), 193.
49. Henry Pickering, *Ruins of Paestum: and Other Compositions in Verse* (Salem, MA: Cushing, 1822), 53–5 ("On the Alienation of Fonthill").
50. Min Wood, "The Search for Elysium; the Naturesque in England and Wales," M.A. diss., Bristol University, 2010.
51. James Stephens Curl and Susan Wilson, *The Oxford Dictionary of Architecture*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
52. Mark Laird, *A Natural History of English Gardening 1650–1800* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015).
53. Douglas D. C. Chambers, *The Planters of the English Landscape Garden; Botany, Trees and the Georgics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 112. Letter from Bartram to Collinson 1 September 1741.
54. Michael Symes, *A Glossary of Garden History* (Princes Risborough: Shire Publications, 2000).
55. Later also adopted by Prince Hermann Pückler-Muskau; see his *Hints on Landscape Gardening*, trans. Bernard Sickert (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1917). First published 1834.
56. Historic England Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.
57. William Robinson, *The Wild Garden*, 4th edn (London: John Murray, 1894).
58. Alexander, *Life at Fonthill 1807–1822*, 172. Beckford to Douglas, 25 November 1816.
59. In spite of the attention he had lavished on Bitham Lake, and the important part it played and still plays in the landscape within the Barrier, fearing the expense of repairing the embankment Beckford went as far as giving orders for the lake bed to be turned into a meadow. Alexander, *Life at Fonthill 1807–1822*, 206.
60. John Claudius Loudon, "Notes on Gardens and Country Seats," *The Gardener's Magazine* XI (September 1835): 441–9.
61. H. A. N. Brockman, *The Caliph of Fonthill* (London: Werner Laurie, 1956), 201.
62. For an account of the Pulham family see Claude Hitchens and Jenny Lilly, *Rock Landscapes, The Pulham Legacy* (Woodbridge: Garden Art Press, 2012).
63. A lingering reminder of these were the two huge gryphons which stood in the Old Park until the 1980s.
64. Kate Feluś, *The Secret Life of the Georgian Garden; Beautiful Objects and Agreeable Retreats* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016).
65. The *Davidia involucrata* or Handkerchief Tree was not introduced until 1901, and therefore must be a planting by the Grosvenors, who were, on the evidence of contemporary photographs, taking good care of the American Ground at that time.

## Chapter 11

1. A portrait of the Alderman Beckford, of ca. 1760–70 and attributed to Tilly Kettle (1734–86), is in the Parliamentary Art Collection. It was bought in 1952 for £5. Beckford is seen holding in his right hand, a plank of wood, a piece of 3 x 2 inches, a builder's level or measure, which is marked with numbers at the top. It was exhibited in *William Beckford* (Bath: Holburne of Menstrie Museum, 1966), 18.
2. See, for instance, Ian Warrell, *Turner's Wessex. Architecture and Ambition* (London: Scala, 2015), 76–119.
3. Written by Arthur M. Templeton, Junior, which was a pseudonym for an unknown writer; see "A Second Visit to Fonthill Abbey, New European Magazine, 1823," in Robert J. Gemmett, *Beckford's Fonthill: The Rise of a Romantic Icon* (Norwich: Michael Russell, 2003), Appendix I, 306.
4. Gouache and watercolour on several sections of seventeenth-century handmade laid paper, attached to a wooden panel, 43.3 x 72.3 cm. Areas of the image were latterly overpainted with gouache. Conservation work on the picture has been carried out by Heather Norville-Day, print, drawing and watercolour conservator, to whom the author is most grateful for information concerning the painting.
5. John Harris, *The Artist and the Country House* (London: Sotheby, 1979), 88–9, 99, n.2.
6. See Andrew Clark, *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood, Antiquary, of Oxford, 1632–1695, described by Himself, collected from his Diaries and Other Papers* (Oxford: Printed for the Oxford Historical Society at the Clarendon Press, 1894), vol. III, 1682–1695, 206–7.
7. See Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift, *Shaping the Day. A History of Timekeeping in England and Wales 1300-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 393.
8. Derek Howse, *Francis Place and the Early History of the Greenwich Observatory* (New York: Science History Publications, 1975), 23. The volume illustrates the complete set. See also Simon Turner, "View of Tangier by Robert Thacker and Thomas Phillips," *Print Quarterly* XXXII (2015): 395–411.
9. British Library, Harley MS 5947.
10. See Antony Griffiths, *The Print in Stuart Britain, 1603–1689* (London: British Museum Press, 1998), 277–8.
11. John Harris, *The Artist and the Country House*, 92a and 92b.

12. John Harris, *The Artist and the Country House*, 89.
13. Gouache on panel, signed lower left, 39.5 x 55.5 cm.
14. It was exhibited in *The Age of Charles II*, Royal Academy, 1960, (547), as by 'R. Thacher', *The Anglo-Dutch Garden in the Age of William and Mary*, catalogue ed. John Dixon Hunt and Erik de Jong, published as a double issue of *Garden History* VIII (April to September 1988), nos. 2 and 3, Apeldorn Rijksmuseum Paleis Het Loo, 31 August–30 November 1988 and London, Christie's 3 January–3 February 1989, 248–250, no. 101a, with plate, wrongly captioned as 101b. See also Mark Laird, *The Flowering of the Landscape Garden* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 28, figs. 12, and 182, and *Mrs. Delany & Her Circle*, eds. Mark Laird and Alicia Weisberg-Roberts (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 150, fig. 142.
15. John Britton, *The Beauties of Wiltshire* vol. I (London: published by the proprietors, 1801), 234–5.
16. James Storer, *A Description of Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire* (London: W. Clarke, 1812), 12.
17. John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey* (Shaftesbury: J. Rutter, 1823) 16, and Appendix A, 105.
18. Published as 'Fonthill (in 1566)' in Storer, *Description of Fonthill Abbey*.
19. Illustrated in John Harris, "Fonthill, Wiltshire – I. Alderman Beckford's Houses," *Country Life* 140 (24 November 1966): 1370, fig. 2. Another engraving, with slight differences, and mistakenly entitled *Fonthill Abbey (in 1566)*, was engraved by J. & H. S. Storer, and published by Sherwood & Co. in 1822.
20. Oil on canvas, 162.5 x 196 cm., signed bottom right of centre, inv. no. 7074.
21. John Britton, *The Beauties of Wiltshire,* 234.
22. Phillips, Seventeenth Day's Sale, 1 October 1823 (lot 722).
23. Phillips, 9 July 1825 (lot 26).
24. Christie's, 5 March 1900 (lot 94), bought Parsons. It was later with S. J. Smith & Son of 42 Duke Street, St James's, London and sold by them at Christie's, 12 December 1903 (lot 85), bought Johnson for £9.9s. – this was probably Oscar Johnson, the dealer.
25. From whom it was bought by Gooden & Fox, dealers, London.
26. Harris, 'Fonthill, Wiltshire', Holburne of Menstrie, 19.
27. Watercolour and graphite on medium, slightly textured, cream wove paper, 22.7 x 22.7 cm., acc. no. B1975.2.25.
28. Elizabeth Einberg, "Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of George Lambert," *Walpole Society* LXIII (2001): 143 (P1740B).
29. Oil on canvas, 80.5 x 109 cm. See J. Harris, "Neglected Views of Britain," *Country Life* (11 July 1991): 81–2.
30. John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey*, 16.
31. Phillips, 11 July 1825 (lot 109).
32. Christie's, 15 June 2001 (lot 57).
33. Einberg, "Catalogue Raisonné," 142–3 (P1740A).
34. Both oil on canvas, 86.3 x 124.4 cm. The attribution was very kindly communicated by Charles Beddington, the specialist on the works of Joli, on an inspection of the paintings on 17 February 2017.
35. See Edward Croft Murray, "The Painted Hall in Heidegger's House at Richmond - I and II," *Burlington Magazine* 78 (April and May 1941), 105–113 and 154–9 for Joli's work in England, and which also lists English subjects painted by him.
36. Francis Russell, "Canaletto and Joli at Chesterfield House," *Burlington Magazine* 130 (August 1988): 627–30.
37. Phillips, 22 August 1807 (lots 600, 601, 602, 603).
38. For his father's collection, see Jeannie Chapel, "William Beckford: Collector of Old Master Paintings, Drawings, and Prints," in *William Beckford 1760–1844: An Eye for the Magnificent*, ed. Derek E. Ostergard (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 230–1.
39. Henry Venn Lansdown, *Recollections of the late William Beckford of Fonthill, Wilts and Lansdown, Bath* (Bath: Facsimile Edition, 1969), 14, and Sidney Blackmore, "The Bath Years: 1822–44," in Ostergard, *William Beckford,* 270.
40. See Charles Beddington, ed., *Canaletto in England: A Venetian Artist Abroad* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2006), 140–2.
41. See Michael Liversidge and Jane Farrington, eds, *Canaletto & England* (London: M. Holberton in association with Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, 1993), 103.
42. John Britton, *The Beauties of Wiltshire,* vol. I, 234. In his notes for this publication, in the John Britton Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford MS Eng. Misc. d222, 13, he described them as 'Large Landscapes of Views of the Old House at fonthill.' Information kindly supplied by Philip Hewat-Jaboor.
43. They were listed by James Storer, 12.
44. Phillips, 25 September 1823, 136 (lot 291).
45. James Everard, Baron Arundell, and Sir Richard Colt Hoare, *The History of Modern Wiltshire. Hundred of Dunworth and Vale of Noddre* (London: John Bowyer Nichols and Son, 1829), vol. 2, pl. III. It is illustrated in John Harris, "Fonthill, Wiltshire – I. Alderman Beckford's Houses," *Country Life*, 140, 24 November 1966, 1370, fig. 3.
46. Included in list of Alfred Morrison's heirlooms, 1896, Fonthill Estate Archives.

47. Beckford to Franchi, 13 November 1814, in Boyd Alexander, ed., *Life at Fonthill 1807–1822* (London: Hart-Davis, 1957), 164.
48. Bodleian Library, MS Beckford, c.58, Inventory of 19–20 Lansdown Crescent, Bath, vol. 5, fol. 81, no. 48 '18 Views by de Cort'. The six known watercolours are *Pencil and wash drawing*, Christie's, 8 July 1986 (lot 46), with a number of other views dated 1791 and 1792. Two other views (lot 45) of the *Portico of Fonthill House*, one with an inscription. Works on paper, Christie's, 2 July 2013 (lot 72) *Fonthill Splendens. Two Views from the Portico towards the Right Wing; and View from the Right Wing across the Entrance*, and two more drawings (lot 73) of *Fonthill Splendens 1791–1798*, of views across the lake.
49. Britton, *The Beauties of Wiltshire*, vol. I, 238. See also inventory for 19–20 Lansdown Crescent, op. cit., for further works in the collection by de Cort.
50. Oil on panel, 56 x 75.6 cm.
51. Nos. 421 and 69.
52. See Templeton, "A Second Visit to Fonthill Abbey," Appendix I, 308.
53. Phillips, 15 October 1823 (lot 328) bought by Nixon; presumed bought in.
54. Phillips, 9 July 1825 (lot 86); presumed bought in.
55. MS Beckford, c. 58, op. cit., fol. 12, Small Library 'View of Fonthill – de Cort'.
56. See Gustav Waagen, "Catalogue of Pictures, Sculpture and Other Works of Art at Basildon Park," n.d., Fonthill Estate Archives.
57. It was exhibited in *The IIIth National Loan Exhibition*, The Grosvenor Gallery, Winter 1914–15 (11). It appeared in two later exhibitions, *The Artist and the Country House from the Fifteenth Century to the Present Day*, Sotheby's, 1995 (91), and *William Beckford, 1760–1844: An Eye for the Magnificent,* New York and Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, 2001–2 (4).
58. Christie's, 8 December 2010 (lot 259), bought in.

## Chapter 12

1. Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) "Westminster Abbey," in *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in London*, vol. 1 (London: author, 1924), 37.
2. J. L. Chester, *The Marriage, Baptismal and Burial Register of the Collegiate church or Abbey of St Peter Westminster* (London: n.p., 1876), 193–4. Note 8 says that there is no record of Anne's burial in the Register, 'which is defective at that period'.
3. C. Avery, "Hubert Le Sueur, The 'Unworthy Praxiteles' of King Charles I," *The Volume of the Walpole Society*, Vol. 48, (1980–2), 163; see also 203, doc. 63.
4. Avery, "Hubert Le Sueur," 163 and 188, Cat. no. 41.
5. An inspection was undertaken by Susan Jenkins, Charles Avery and Patricia Wengraf on 5 February 2016.
6. John Dart, *Westmonasterium or The History and Antiquities of The Abbey Church of St Peters Westminster*, vol. 2 (London: n.p., 1723), 181, illustrated engraving no. 56.
7. R. Ackermann, *The History of the Abbey Church of St Peter's Westminster Its Antiquities and Monuments (*London: 1811), vol.2, 173, illustrated plate 40: 'East Side of the Chapel of St Paul', F.Mackenzie delt; J.Black Aquatint.
8. J. P. Neale and E. W. Brayley, *The History and Antiquities of the Abbey Church of St Peter Westminster,* vol. 2 (London, n.p.: 1818–23), 177.
9. J. B. Nichols and Son, *Collectanea topographica e genealogica* vol. 11 (London: 1835), 13; reference kindly provided by Dr. Luis Ramón-Laca Menéndez de Luarca, Lecturer in the Department of Architecture, University of Alcalá.
10. The National Archives, PROB/11/321, Valladolid 16 June 1652. The will was proved in England on 15 August 1666 (according to Chester, *Marriage, Baptismal and Burial Register*, 193–4, note 8).
11. Probably Francis Seymour, 1st Baron Seymour of Trowbridge (1590?–1664), third son of Edward Seymour, Viscount Beauchamp.
12. English College of Valladolid Archive: Series II, L5, No. 11, letter from John Newport in London to Father Rector, dated 22 December 1676, with thanks to Fr Peter Harris, Honorary Archivist of the English College, Valladolid.
13. Chester, *Marriage, Baptismal and Burial Register*, 193–4, note 8 records that, 'The monument erected by Lord Cottington's nephew and heir states that his remains were brought to this country in 1679, but the date of interment, in both official and unofficial registers, is distinctly 1678'.
14. Dart, *Westmonasterium*, 181.
15. Lever-arch file, Westminster Abbey Library – Ref. 2/1.026 (no 6) [206] Francis, Lord Cottington.
16. Lever-arch file.

17. As suggested in email correspondence in December 2015, Dr. Luis Ramón-Laca Menéndez de Luarca, Lecturer in the Department of Architecture, University of Alcalá.
18. See Patricia Wengraf, "Francesco Fanelli & Sons in Italy and London, on a Grander Scale," in *European Bronzes from the Quentin Collection*, ed. M. Leithe-Jasper and P. Wengraf, catalogue of an exhibition at the Frick Collection, New York, 2004, 31–53.
19. Geoffrey Fisher, quoted in Nikolaus Pevsner and Simon Bradley, *The Buildings of England London 6: Westminster* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 154.
20. Avery, 163.
21. Westminster Abbey Muniments (WAM) Chapter Minutes, vol. 15, f. 288. The fine for Watt's monument by Chantrey was £141.11s.4d, paid on 26 May 1825 (WAM, Funeral Fee Book).
22. Report of the Surveyor of the Fabric 1962.
23. Report of the Surveyor of the Fabric March 1962–March 1964.
24. Westminster Abbey Muniments 51003.
25. John Vicar's pamphlet "God's Ark over-topping the World's Waves," quoted in John Field, *Kingdom Power and Glory: A Historical Guide to Westminster Abbey (*London: James & James, 1999), 98–9.
26. W. Bray, ed., *Memoirs Illustrative of the Life and Writings of John Evelyn Esq. FRS*. 2nd edn vol. 1 (London: n.p., 1819), 315.
27. Chester, *Marriage, Baptismal and Burial Registers*, 522: an unpublished note states that she died between 18 December 1658 and 22 November 1659. WAM 6368 and 6376, burial fees 'for the Lady Bradshaw £13:06:08'.
28. Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews. Vol. 1 (1660). London: G. Bell & Sons, 1970, 309.
29. A. Richardson, "The Last Ceremony of Honour," *Records of Huntingdonshire* 3 no. 7 (1999): 3–15.
30. WAM 44030 (A) 1661.
31. Richardson, "The Last Ceremony of Honour," note 6, 13.
32. Ibid.
33. Bray, *Memoirs* vol. 1, note 3, 330.
34. Pepys, *Diary* vol. 2 (1661), 31, note 4. For the fate of Cromwell's head see Pepys, *Diary* vol. 5 (1664), 297 – apparently it remained on display at Westminster Hall for about 25 years.
35. See Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, *Historical Memorials of Westminster Abbey* (London: John Murray, 1882), 209, note 6. The houses stood until 1739 between the north transept and the west end on the north side of the Abbey, and the backyard is now the green between the churchyard of St Margaret's at Westminster and the Abbey. Also thanks to Richard Foster; see his "An Historical Sketch of the North Precinct of Westminster Abbey with Special Reference to its Prisons," in *Westminster: The Art, Architecture and Archaeology of the Royal Palace and Abbey – The British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions XXXIX*, Part I, ed. Warwick Rodwell and Tim Tatton-Brown (Leeds: Maney, 2016), 362, Figures 9 and 10.

## Chapter 13

1. Manuscript of Cyrus Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford Esqr, 1846*. Bodleian Library, Oxford. MS Beckford c.86.
2. Charles Leslie, *New History of Jamaica* (London: J. Hodges, 1740), 267.
3. Horace Walpole to Bentley, 23 February 1775. In *Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence* vol. 35, ed. William Stanley Lewis and Warren Hunting Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 211; this was written just 10 days after the fire at Fonthill.
4. University College London's Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slave-ownership, as well as researching slave-ownership, is examining the impact of slavery's role in shaping British history and the legacies which reach into the present. http:// www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs. Members of the Beckford family are included within its scope.
5. Perry Gauci, *William Beckford: First Prime Minister of the London Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 15.
6. John Burke lists: Pitt, Baron Rivers; Ellis, Baron Seaford; Ellis, Baron Howard de Walden; Courtenay, heir presumptive to earldom of Devon; and Carleton, Baron Dorchester. John Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland* vol. 2 (London: Henry Colburn, 1835), 679.
7. Gauci, *William Beckford,* 21.
8. Gauci, *William Beckford,* 22.
9. *Gentleman's Magazine,* Dec 1735, 737a. This has a spending power of £25,800,000 if converted to 2015 prices (National Archives currency convertor).
10. Gauci, *William Beckford,* 35–8.

11. The three brothers would have a presence in England. Richard (1712–56) was MP for Bristol (1754–6) and owned a grand London town house, 1 Greek Street. Julines (ca. 1717–64) was MP for Salisbury 1754–64, and purchased a country estate, Stepleton in Dorset. Francis (ca. 1719–86) married firstly Lady Albinia Bertie, daughter of the Duke of Ancaster and Kesteven, and secondly the heiress Susanna Love of Basing Park, Hampshire.
12. Wiltshire History Centre, Abstract of Title of William Beckford to his Estate in Wiltshire. 1990/2/3.
13. Gauci, *William Beckford*, 147.
14. For his landholdings 1754–80, see Gauci, *William Beckford*, 148 (Table 6.1).
15. Boyd Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son* (London: Centaur Press: 1962), 201.
16. Gauci, *William Beckford*, 156. At the time of his death his mortgage with Hoare's stood at £48,000.
17. National Archives. PROB/11/959/139.
18. J. W. Oliver, *The Life of William Beckford* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 6.
19. Mrs Beckford to Sir William Hamilton, 26 Dec 1780. Alfred Morrison, *The Collection of Autograph Letters and Historical Documents (Second Series) Hamilton & Nelson Papers* (Printed for Private Circulation, 1893). vol. 1, 65–6.
20. Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, 203.
21. Letter to Thomas Wildman, Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son,* 127.
22. Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son,* 210
23. Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son,* 156–7.
24. Boyd Alexander, ed., *Life at Fonthill 1807–1822* (London: Hart-Davis, 1957), 128.
25. Alexander, *Life at Fonthill*, 47 (n. 2).
26. Christie's, *A Capital and Truly Valuable Collection of Original High-Finished Drawings …by the Younger Cozens*… April 10, 1805.
27. Catalogues for the book sales are included in Robert J. Gemmett, ed. *Sale Catalogues of Libraries of Eminent Persons. Vol.3. Poets and Men of Letters. William Beckford* (London: Mansell with Sotheby Parke-Bernet, 1972).
28. Sidney Blackmore, "William Beckford in London," in *William Beckford 1760–1844: An Eye for the Magnificent,* ed. Derek E. Ostergard (New Haven and London: Yale University Press for the Bard Graduate Center, 2001), 256–7.
29. Robert J. Gemmett, *William Beckford's Fonthill* (Fonthill Media, 2016), 88–102.
30. Alexander, *Life at Fonthill,* 115.
31. Alexander, *Life at Fonthill,* 106.
32. Alexander, *Life at Fonthill,* 276.
33. Alexander, *Life at Fonthill,* 291.
34. Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, 197.
35. Alexander, *Life at Fonthill,* 340.
36. "William Thomas Beckford." Legacies of British Slave-Ownership database, accessed 18 May 2017. http://wwdepts-live. ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/22232.

## Chapter 14

1. Some years back it was intimated that Isaac de Caus may have been responsible for the stables of the early house (John Harris, "Fonthill, Wiltshire - I," *Country Life* (24 November 1966): 1370–74), but the late architectural historian Howard Colvin rejected this view. See Howard Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840*, 4th edn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 306–8. Colvin's entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* continues to reflect his conclusion. However Giles Worsley, in his book *The British Stable* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005) and in the *Georgian Group Journal* revived the suggestion, though there is still no direct evidence. See Chapter 3 for further discussion.
2. Tour No. 76. On Monday 12 June John Loveday was en route to Wardour Castle via Fonthill and Tisbury. I am grateful to the executors of the late Sarah Markham for a copy of the transcript of this tour and for permission to reproduce this extract.
3. John Britton, *The Beauties of Wiltshire, Displayed in Statistical, Historical, and Descriptive Sketches: interspersed with Anecdotes of the Arts*, 3 vols (London: Vernor & Hood, 1801, 1825), vol. I, 234: 'A large and fine Landscape, by Lambert, representing Fonthill as it appeared in the year 1740; the figures by Hogarth.'
4. Deed of Covenant to produce Title Deeds, 20 January 1744, old series (i.e. 1745), Wiltshire History Centre (hereafter referred to as WHC), 413/277.
5. James Pelham to Newcastle, Claremont, 22 June 1750, British Library (hereafter referred to as BL), Add MS 33066, fol. 137$^{v}$.
6. Richard Pococke's visit of 2 July 1754, BL, Add MS 22999, fol. 66$^{v}$.
7. See Chapter 11 for attribution of the paintings. I have some concerns about attributing the two Fonthill paintings to Joli, although they certainly embrace the spirit of the mid-eighteenth century Italian school,

especially Canaletto and his followers. Aside from two views of Richmond (and decorating the entrance hall of Heidegger House there), all of Joli's works in England are of London scenes, not further afield (see Ralph Toledano, *Antonio Joli: Modena 1700–1777 Napoli* (Torino: Artema, 2006), 234–5 and 274–80). There is also a time factor. The window for Joli to have depicted certain Fonthill features as shown in these paintings, and completed the canvases, is very limited. The church was not completed until May 1749, and maybe even later given that it was not consecrated until September that year (see WHC D1/60/1 and D1/61/4/15). Joli, it seems, returned to Europe shortly after the death (5 September 1749) of John James Heidegger. Another key feature, the rotunda, was not created until almost five years later after Joli left England (see BL Add MS 22999, fols 66-67). If Joli were the painter, the compositions may be part capriccio, to represent the owner's intended works; otherwise, it may be that features were added in or completed later. Certainly the earlier square prospect tower in Lambert's painting would have appeared incongruous. Either would account for showing the church in its pristine condition, and the later rotunda being in place (and it would certainly help explain its non-conformist roof).

8. Michael Cousins, "A Maturing Landscape: Wotton in 1797," in *The Grenville Landscape of Wotton House, New Arcadian Journal* 65/66 (2009): 89–99.
9. See John Andrews and Andrew Dury, *A Topographical Map of Wiltshire, on a Scale of Two Inches to a Mile from an Actual Survey* (London: n.p., 1773), in 18 imperial sheets, where this feature is still quite evident.
10. The Lambert painting that was auctioned at Christie's on 15 June 2001 (lot 57, realised £71,950) is useful in that it shows that the garden temple would have been deep enough to accommodate seating.
11. As with many garden structures, this temple may have acquired a different use in later life as a banqueting house, used for drinking tea. Unpublished Diary of Sophia, Countess of Shelburne (1746–71), vol. 5, 14 July 1769 to 15 September 1770, 6, Bowood House Archives. I am grateful to Min Wood for our interchange of views on the possible evolution of this building.
12. James Everard, Baron Arundell, and Sir Richard Colt Hoare, *The History of Modern Wiltshire. Hundred of Dunworth and Vale of Noddre* (London: John Bowyer Nichols and Son, 1829), Plate III: Fonthill. Redivivus A.$^{o}$ 1755. / Published by Sir R. C. Hoare Bar.$^{t}$ January, 1829. John Harris, "Fonthill, Wiltshire – I," *Country Life* (24 November 1966), 1370–4.
13. These are probably the paintings referred to by Britton, op. cit., 234, as 'Two other views of the same mansion and its environs, in 1753, as improved by the late Mr. Beckford previous to the fire.'
14. The equestrian statue bears a marked resemblance to that of Marcus Aurelius at Wilton, but there are visible differences such as the horse's raised leg. That the figure was of the Alderman attired in Roman garb has to be a distinct possibility.
15. Joyce Godber, "The Travel Journal of Philip Yorke 1744–63," in *The Marchioness Grey of Wrest Park* (The Bedfordshire Historical Society, 1968) [vol. XLVII], 159, visit of 1 August 1760.
16. The date of the visit can be determined from an accompanying cash book (KPL 283), Worcester Archive and Archaeological Service (The Hive), reference: 899:310, accession number: BA 10470/2 (KPL 294). Note book of Edward Knight Jnr.
17. See Chapter 4.
18. 1740, Government Art Collection 7074.
19. BL, Add MS 6767, fols 38$^{v}$–37$^{v}$. The account is written in the rear of James Essex's "Antiquities of Cambridge," and while often considered anonymous, the writing corresponds with that of Essex's less-polished manuscripts, plus there are other indications in the work to suggest that both sections of the book were contemporaneous.
20. Lt. Col. R. H. Cunnington, 'The Cunningtons of Wiltshire', *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine*, vol. LV, no. cC (June 1954), 227. In his diary of 1834, William Cunnington wrote: 'went into the caves at Fonthill and found some shells etc. at Tisbury Lane'. This was William Cunnington III (1813–1906), an amateur mineral collector.
21. WHC, 9/35/165, letter 14. Henry Hoare to Lord Bruce, Stourhead, 29 August 1763. See also Robert Wilson-North and Stephen Porter, "Witham, Somerset: From Carthusian Monastery to Country House to Gothic Folly," *Architectural History* 40 (1997): 93.
22. Sir John Soane's Museum, S. M. Adam volumes 51/12, 51/13 and 51/14 (which features an artistic backdrop of cascades); a date range of 1758–70 has been given. A fourth, associated design, 2/183, while 'tagged' as for Fonthill, is more likely to be a rough sketch by Robert Adam for a bridge at Croome for Lord Coventry. I am grateful to Amy Frost for bringing these drawings to my attention.
23. Tate Collection D02196 (Turner Bequest XLVII 19). See also A. J. Finberg, *A Complete Inventory of the Drawings of the Turner Bequest*, 2 vols. (London: HMSO, 1909), vol. I, 121; and, David Blayney Brown, ed., *J.M.W. Turner: Sketchbooks, Drawings and Watercolours* (Tate Research Publication, April 2015). I am grateful to Caroline Dakers for bringing this drawing to my attention.
24. Kate Feluś, *The Secret Life of the Georgian Garden: Beautiful Objects & Agreeable Retreats* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016), 77–8. I am grateful to Lord Margadale for confirming this.
25. Botany Library, Natural History Museum, MSS Col. 'An Account of the first Introduction of American Seeds into Great Britain. By Peter Collinson…', fol. 20: 'Alderman Beckford 5 5 – '.

26. The National Archives [hereafter referred to as TNA], PRO 30/8/7, fols 169–69v, Hester Pitt to William Pitt, Hayes; the letter is undated, but Vere Birdwood gives 1760 as the year (see *So Dearly Loved, So Much Admired. Letters to Hester Pitt, Lady Chatham From Her Relations and Friends 1744–1801*, ed. Vere Birdwood (London: HMSO, 1994), 226.
27. William Gilpin, *Observations on the Western Parts of England, Relative Chiefly to Beauty*… (London: T. Cadell Jnr. And W. Davies, 1798), 116. In the Dedication (iv), Gilpin states that the book 'has lain by me these twenty years'.
28. St Giles's Muniments FC1, letters from William Beckford to Lord Shaftesbury, Spanish Town, 25 May and 9 July 1749; John Cope, William Beckford's steward, to Lord Shaftesbury, Spanish Town, 30 July 1749. I am grateful to Suzanna Fleming for these references.
29. WHC, PR/Tisbury: St John the Baptist, 812/8; Bishops Marriage Licence Bonds for the Diocese of Sarum, D1/62. I am grateful to Linda Keightley for sharing her work on the Lane family tree with me.
30. WHC, 383/4, fols 9–9v. 'A Bill for stone P work done for ye use of Henry Hoare Esq.re 1748 About ye Grotto at Stower Head by W.m Privet & Co.'
31. Michael Cousins, "John Castles ('Master of the Grottos') and the Eighteenth Century Grottoes of London," *The London Gardener… For the Years 2013–14*, vol. 18 (London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust, 2014), 22–41, particularly 30.
32. Richard Warner, *Excursions from Bath* (Bath: Printed by R. Cruttwell, 1801), p. 211. Warner was actually making a comparison with the grotto and cascade at Bowood, but failed to differentiate Lane father and son.
33. Charles Hamilton was the fourteenth child, youngest son of nine, of the 6th Earl of Abercorn.
34. The first recorded payment to 'Jos Lane' was for £43.2s.10d on 16 January 1764, which would be for work of the previous year. Royal Bank of Scotland, Drummonds Accounts, DR/427/48.
35. Michael Cousins, "The Cascade and Grotto at Bowood," *Follies Magazine* no. 59 (autumn 2004): 18–21. There are strong associations that lend support to the Lanes' progress with grotto-building: Henry Hoare's Stourhead was less than 15 miles from Fonthill and as neighbours reciprocal visits were made. Painshill's owner, Charles Hamilton, was also a friend of Henry Hoare, and he gave assistance in aspects of Stourhead's layout. Based on their similar interests, gardens, planting, the arts, etc., it is sensible to assume that the subject of ornamental buildings and features such as grottoes was a frequent topic of discussion.
36. BL, Add MS 42087, fols 45–45v. Lord Lyttelton to George Grenville, Bowood, 25 July 1769. Lyttelton visited Fonthill again in July 1772 (Huntington Library, Montagu Papers, MO 1369, Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, Hagley, 11 July 1772).
37. Laurent Châtel, "The Mole, the Bat, and the Fairy or the Sublime Grottoes of 'Fonthill Splendens'," *The Beckford Journal* 5 (Spring 1999): 54.
38. Bowood House Archives, unpublished Diary of Sophia, Countess of Shelburne, vol. 5, 14 July 1769 to 15 September 1770, 4–9; the visit to Fonthill House was 25–30 July 1769. I am grateful to Kate Fielden, Bowood's former curator, for providing a transcript of these diary entries, and to The Trustees of the Bowood Collection for permission to quote from this.
39. London School of Economics, MS Coll Misc. 38 (4 vols), vol. II, 114–21. John Parnell, *Journal of a tour thro' Wales and England Anno: 1769*. Parnell visited on 28 September 1769.
40. TNA, C12/1325/21, 12 December 1770 [Taken without Oath by Order dated 4th Decr 1770].
41. Cyrus Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford of Fonthill*…, 2 vols (London: Charles J. Skeet, 1859), vol. II, 80–81.
42. BL, Add MS 42168, fols 12–14. Mrs Lybbe Powys, "Five Days Tour"; her visit to Fonthill occurred 7 August 1776.
43. Andrews and Dury, *Topographical Map of Wiltshire*, n.p.
44. Gilpin, *Observations on the Western Parts of England*, 116.
45. [Sir Richard Sulivan], *Observations made during a Tour of England, Scotland, and Wales. In a Series of Letters* (London: Printed for T. Becket, 1780), 50–1; [2nd edn (1785), pp. 126–7, 129]. The tour was made in 1778.
46. Bodleian Library, MS. Beckford c. 84, fol. 110.
47. Anonymous, "Account of the Works Now Executing at Fonthill," *The European Magazine and London Review*, XXXI (February 1797), 104–5.
48. Cyrus Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford of Fonthill, Author of 'Vathek'* vol. II (London: Charles K. Street, 1859), 80.
49. John B. Papworth to James Morrison, 10 Caroline Street, 20 February 1838: 'I think I understand Mr Coombes letter to mean that the removal of the Earth mound is to cover bare sloping surfaces at the Quarry so that verdure may be produced instead of shewing the Rock part, that is neither picturesque nor fertile _ there are many places ~~there~~ of the Kind at the spot, & it will be an improvement, necessarily.' Fonthill Estate Archives, A/7/0205.
50. Henry Meister, *Letters Written During a Residence in England, Translated from the French of Henry Meister* (London: T. N. Longman and O. Rees, 1799), 302. [*Souvenirs de mes Voyages en Angleterre*, 2 vols. (Zurich: Orell, Gessner, Fussli & Comp., 1795), vol. II, 244].

51. Anonymous, "Account of the Works Now Executing at Fonthill," 105. It was also noted in this publication that 'Further improvements, however, are in due time to be made upon this water; its size to be still enlarged, and its form more varied.'
52. Britton, *Beauties of Wiltshire*, 248.
53. Special Collections, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, MS Trv q 4 SWE. *Rev. John Swete, Tour through England & Scotland*, vol. v, 71–2. The accompanying description implies that the tour ran from 1783 to 1874; in fact it started 1 May 1783 and completed that year. His visit to Fonthill occurred around mid-October, based on dating evidence available.
54. Anonymous, "Account of the Works Now Executing at Fonthill," 105.
55. Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford at Fonthill* vol. ii, 97.
56. *The Collection of Autograph Letters and Historical Documents formed by Alfred Morrison* (second series 1882–93) vol. i ([London]: Printed for Private Circulation, 1893–6), A–B, 192–3. Letter 33, Portman Square, 19 May 1784; letter 34, Fonthill, 10 July 1784; letter 35, Fonthill, 13 October 1784.
57. WHC, PR/Tisbury St John the Baptist, 812/14. Joseph was buried at Tisbury on 28 July 1784, aged either 66 or 67.
58. Johan Frederik Willem van Spaen "'A Dutchman's Visits to Some English Gardens in 1791': Extracts from the Unpublished Journal of Baron Johan Frederik Willem van Spaen van Biljoen, with a Biographical Introduction by Heimerick Tromp," *Journal of Garden History* 2, no. 1 (January–March 1982): 41–58. The visit took place on 28 July 1791.
59. Meister, *Letters*, 303–4 [*Souvenirs…*, 245–6].
60. Britton, *Beauties of Wiltshire*, 247 and 251.
61. Britton, *Beauties of Wiltshire*, 247. See also Anonymous, "Account of the Works Now Executing at Fonthill," 105, describing this area near the end of the century: 'This whole range of scenery, but particularly the quarry part, the wood having now attained a very considerable growth, may, in point of beauty and original effect, challenge any garden scenery in the kingdom.'
62. "Fonthill Property," *The Times*, 4 October 1822, 3.
63. Meister, *Letters*, 304–5 [*Souvenirs…*, 247].
64. *The Times*, 4 October, 1822, 3.
65. It is marked as such on the first edition 25-inch Ordnance Survey map, 1st edn (1887), LXIV.11.
66. Combes letters, folder 2, James Combes to James Morrison, [Fonthill], 4 May 1837, Morrison Estate Archives, A/7/0203.
67. Elizabeth Hervey, *Melissa and Marcia or the Two Sisters: A Novel*, 2 vols. (London: W. Lane, 1788), vol. ii, 204–12. Lady Harriet Marlow [William Beckford], *Modern Novel Writing, or the Elegant Enthusiast, and Interesting Emotions of Arabella Bloomville. A Rhapsodical Romance; interspersed with Poetry*, 2 vols. (London: Printed for G. G. and J. Robinson, 1796), vol. ii, 63–72 (Chapter 6: "Captivating Scenery").
68. Christopher Thacker, *Masters of the Grotto: Joseph & Josiah Lane* (Tisbury: The Compton Press Ltd, 1976), 27–28; Robert J. Gemmett, *Beckford's Fonthill: The Rise of a Romantic Icon* (Norwich: Michael Russell (Publishing) Ltd, 2003), 66–67.
69. Hervey, 210. Mowl, 36 and 62, for example, treats as fact the seasonal substitution of 'lily and violet' with 'tuberose, jessamine, and orange trees…' and that 'The pots were concealed in the earth, and they appeared natives of the cave'.
70. Anonymous, "Account of the Works Now Executing at Fonthill," 104.
71. Margaret Maria Elizabeth (1785–1818), Susan Euphemia (1786–1859).
72. Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford* vol. ii, 80–1.
73. Likewise Redding's statement that 'Mr. Beckford had, therefore, some experience in planting' is strangely placed and isolated, appended to his creation of the Alpine Gardens when his planting work about the Abbey was considerably richer, more varied, and of a significantly greater scale.
74. Meister, *Letters*, 305 [*Souvenirs…*, 248].
75. Britton, *Beauties of Wiltshire*, 244–5. This should not to be confused with his father's eight-column rotunda which was on the high ground to the west of Splendens.
76. Mowl, 34–5. Mowl's account of the grottoes is quite at odds with the facts. Laurent Châtel, 64, rightly notes the significant grammatical error in the English translation, which changes the context of Meister's original French description.
77. John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey* (Shaftesbury: by the author, 1823), 108.
78. Staffordshire Record Office D6584/C76, journal 22, entry for 20 August 1797. I am grateful to Dr Dianne Barre for providing this reference.
79. Thacker, *Masters of the Grotto*, 25.
80. Lot 255, Jamaica Letter Books, Manuscript. Christie, Manson, Woods sale catalogue, *Important Autograph Letters*, 2 April 1975. William Beckford to James Wildman, 5 August 1790. Quoted by Gemmett, 67.
81. This, however, seems not to have been a serious consideration until some years later: "Interesting News from Various Parts of the Country [Tower on Stops' Beacon, near Fonthill]," *Gentleman's Magazine* 66, pt. 2 (September 1796): 784.

82. Beckford clearly pampered his companion in such a manner – one of the small gardens in the Abbey grounds 'had a small hot-house in it, not much bigger than a cucumber frame […] for a favourite dwarf' (see John Claudius Loudon, *The Gardener's Magazine*, vol. xi, no. 66 (September 1835), 444).
83. Devon Heritage Centre, 2741M/FC16/2a–2b fols 2$^{v}$–3, Maria Ley (of Treyhill, Cornwall) to her brother William. Although undated, other commentary in the letter indicates it was written ca. 4 June 1799.
84. Michael Cousins, "The Cascade and Grotto at Bowood," op. cit. According to the *OED*, a tumbler is a dialect term for a 'detached mass of rock; a rolled stone or boulder'. Although Warner uses the term 'tumblers' in the construction of Bowood's rockwork, it should not be applied by default to the materials used in Fonthill's tunnels.
85. Everard and Hoare, *History of Modern Wiltshire*, 129–30.
86. While absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, a survey of the estates of the then owner, Francis Yerbury (Bodleian Library, MS. Top. Wilts. C. 2, fol. 29, Survey by James Sartain and Son, 1777), shows no such feature or setting that would suggest that the grotto was present at that time.
87. Barnard's father, Ezekiel Dickinson (1711–88) purchased the estate in 1751; the earlier house of 1720 was never completed, and was demolished when it was replaced by the present house by James Wyatt in 1796. It is unlikely that the grotto preceded the house.
88. Michael Cousins, "The Grotto, Ascot Place, Berkshire: Another Lane Grotto?" *Follies Magazine* 67 (summer 2007), 10–14.
89. John Claudius Loudon, "Notes on Gardens & Country Seats, Visited from July 27 to September 16 1833," *The Gardener's Magazine* xii, no. 79 (October 1836): 505. In *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion* (London: Longman, Orme, Green, and Longmans, 1838), 441, Loudon revises Lane's income to 'nearly a pound a day, when employed'. Morrison would later (1844) buy a coloured copy of 'Repton's Landscape Gardening' from Mrs Loudon (Fonthill Estate Archives, A/2/0112).
90. WHC, PR/Tisbury: St John the Baptist, 812/19. P2/L/779, 'last Will and Testament' of Joseph Lane, in which he left bequests of £100 to his surviving daughters from his second marriage, Rebecca and Deborah (plus an estate called 'Jerrards' to Rebecca), and a second estate called 'Dowdings, with the Cyder Mill and Press and Mash Tubb' to Josiah, who was executor. The remainder of his goods were to be equally divided among all his children, but with Josiah 'to have the Liberty of purchasing the other Shares at a proper Valuation'. I am grateful to Linda Keightley for her transcript of this document.
91. Loudon, *The Gardener's Magazine* xii (October 1839): 503.
92. Meister, *Letters*, 304. The Hermitage is bereft of any opening from above, and although the nearby tunnel did have a number of oculi, its floor does not lend itself to being laid with mosaic, and certainly not one where a mariner's compass (invariably round) would sit comfortably either physically or with the description: 'in the centre'. The floor of the cold bath behind the lakeside grotto, however, would fit that bill admirably, as does Loudon's description of '[t]he orifice in the roof of this cave, by which it is lighted'. Note the orifice, i.e. singular; the tunnel had more than one oculus (only one is left open with a grille, the others having been filled in, but when any of these works happened is open to question). Even the comment that the orifice 'is unprotected by any fence or grating, and may be considered as a trap for the destruction of men or other animals' is still appropriate for this grotto, considering its size. The comment about animals may be pertinent as this is the side of the park where Beckford had the menagerie and also the deer park, although whether the latter was ever stocked has not been established. Loudon could, of course, have been referring to another quarry cave entirely.
93. Wyatt Papworth, *John B. Papworth, Architect to the King of Wurtemburg: A Brief Record of his Life and Works* (London: privately printed, 1879), 79–84; 90–2. From 1828–9 Papworth had been engaged to make alterations at the Morrisons' town house in Harley Street. Papworth, however, was not the sole architect engaged by Morrison; William Atkinson it seems was also involved with works at Fonthill. See Fonthill Estate Archives, A/7/0203, Combes letters, folders 1 & 2. This section draws heavily on the archive, and references are given only where appropriate.
94. Papworth, *John B. Papworth*, 80. Elsewhere the hot-house was repaired, a former greenhouse converted into an orange house, and a further orange house proposed.
95. Combes letters, folder 2, 15 June 1837, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/7/0203.
96. Combes letters, folder 2, 22 November 1837, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/7/0203.
97. Combes letters, folder 2, 5 February 1838, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/7/0203. The covering also included 'The piece from the Lodge to the entrance at the House, … a Considerable portion of the enclosure below the Gardens, part of the Terrace, part of Ice House [in] Park, and several Hundred Loads in patches in the Park south of the House…'. Morrison had 'apply'd to three places for Deer viz. – Longleat, Hale, and Avingdon [Avington, Hampshire, belonging to the Marquis of Buckingham]'. Despite being offered '10 Couple of Deer … fine fallow Deer Black & Spotted' by the latter for 40 guineas, there were difficulties in acquiring them. See Folder 3, letters of 27 March, 5 and 14 April 1839.
98. The sale by Rushworth & Jarvis started 21 July, and lasted four days.
99. Papworth to James Morrison, 20 July 1843, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/9/0318. In *Coade's Gallery, or Exhibition of Artificial Stone, Westminster-Bridge Road…* (London: S. Tibson, 1799), 22, this work is

described as a group and occupied 'a space of 20 feet in height by 12 in width, the *Polyphemus* is a statue of 10ft 6in. a cave is formed in the rock, at the entrance of it lays the *Acis* and *Galatea*, much larger than life'. Papworth's proposal suggests that they were separate pieces. The fragment of the torso of Polyphemus was sold by Christie's in 2014 for £69,700.

100. W. King's bill for 'Goods b[t] by Auction', 3 Day, lot 119 and 4 Day, lot 195, Fonthill Estate Archives. According to Caroline Dakers (from information conveyed by Lord Margadale), one head has been recovered; the majority, it is feared, were broken or stolen during the Second World War when soldiers were billeted in the park.
101. Combes letters, folder 2, James Combes to James Morrison, Fonthill, 30 May 1837, Fonthill Estate Archives, A/7/0203.

## Chapter 15

1. Boyd Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son: A Study of William Beckford* (London: Centaur Press, Ltd., 1962), 116.
2. Lewis Melville, *The Life and Letters of William Beckford of Fonthill* (London: William Heinemann, 1910), 92. This is a letter from Beckford at Lucca to Miss Burney, 22 September 1780.
3. Joseph Farington, *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, 17 vols. ed. Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), III, 1091 (entry for 16 November 1798). At several points in the later 1790s, Farington reported that Beckford asserted (repeatedly) his ambition to be an 'encourager of the arts' (III, 726, 734). See also Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, 160.
4. The complexities of the terms 'aristocracy' and 'aristocrat' are too many to broach here, whether considering how eighteenth-century people used the term or how historians have used it in general and in reference to Beckford: Amanda Goodrich, "Understanding a Language of 'Aristocracy', 1700–1850," *Historical Journal* 56 (2013): 369–98.
5. Donna T. Andrew, *Aristocratic Vice: The Attack on Duelling, Suicide, Adultery, and Gambling in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013); Anna Clark, *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 113–25; John Brewer, *Sentimental Murder: Love and Madness in the Eighteenth Century* (London: HarperCollins, 2004), 87–91; Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c.1780–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
6. David Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy: Grandeur and Decline in Modern Britain* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 9–36.
7. On the success of the eighteenth-century British aristocracy, see J. V. Beckett, *The Aristocracy in England 1660-1914* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) and John Cannon, *Aristocratic Century: The Peerage of Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
8. William Beckford, *The Vision, Liber Veritatis*, ed. Guy Chapman (Cambridge: The University Press for Constable and Company, 1930), 89–138.
9. The key source is Perry Gauci, *William Beckford: First Prime Minister of the London Empire* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013).
10. Beckford's speech on the Address, 1761, quoted in Gauci, *William Beckford*, 107: 'When I talk of the sense of the people, I mean the middling people of England – the manufacturer, the yeoman, the merchant, the country gentleman – they who bear all the heat of the day and who pay all taxes to supply all the expenses of court and government. They have a right, Sir, to interfere in the condition and conduct of the nation ... the people of England taken in this limitation are a good-natured, well-intentioned and very sensible people, who know better perhaps than other nations under the sun whether they are well-governed or not.'
11. Of course, it could have been much worse, as the contemporary case of Edward Onslow (1758–1829) attests: a public display of homosexual attraction led to the loss of his parliamentary seat and permanent self-exile in France. Lewis Namier and John Brooke, *The House of Commons, 1754–1790*, 3 vols. (London: HMSO for the History of Parliament Trust, 1964), III, 226–7.
12. Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, 40-41; James Lees-Milne, *William Beckford* (Tisbury: Compton Russell, 1976), 71; Cyrus Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford of Fonthill, Author of "Vathek",* vol. I (London; Charles K. Street, 1859), 77–8, 149–51.
13. Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, 95, where Beckford is quoted as writing that he preferred 'the company of young pathics "to all goods or titles and to all glory present and future" '. Beckford had a 'reluctance to exchange his life of super-sensibility and poetic melancholy for the public activities into which he was being pressed by his family', according to Lees-Milne, *William Beckford*, 16.
14. In his contribution to the collection *William Beckford 1760–1844: An Eye for the Magnificent*, ed. Derek E. Ostergard (New Haven and London: For the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design and Culture by Yale University Press, 2001), Watkin made the point that Beckford is usually

considered 'a unique and exotic creature, a brilliant but bizarre eccentric'. In that essay, Watkin related Beckford to John Soane and Thomas Hope (outsiders who designed their own houses which then served in significant part as repositories for collections). Watkin's goal was to remove Beckford from the status of isolated eccentric.

15. Melville, *Life and Letters*, 31–2.
16. Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, 12. Late in life, his vocation was still on his mind: Redding recorded Beckford's 'impatient feeling ... of his not having done enough in the way of acquirement, of his having thrown away his times and opportunities' (Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, 137).
17. William Beckford, *Vathek*, ed. Thomas Keymer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 82. *Vathek* was written in 1782 in French and had a complicated publishing history in the 1780s (x–xii).
18. Melville, *Life and Letters*, 92.
19. William Hauptman, "Clinging Fast 'to My Tutelary Mountains': Beckford in Helvetia," in *William Beckford*, ed. Derek E. Ostergard, 73–87, at 77. (This is in a letter at Geneva, 1778.) In an unsent letter of about 1779, he asserted that 'I will exclude myself if possible from the World': Timothy Mowl, "William Beckford: A Biographical Perspective," in *William Beckford*, ed. Derek E. Ostergard, 17–31, at 23.
20. Melville, *Life and Letters*, 187. On another occasion, Beckford wrote: 'I would rather live in hermit solitude, than in the turmoil of faction and political intrigue': Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford* vol. II, 160.
21. Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford*, II, 4.
22. Melville, *Life and Letters*, 4. He wrote this at the age of 17. It was preceded by the remark: 'he was determined not to be what to-day is called a "horsey" man, nor "to despise poetry and venerable Antiquity, murder Taste, abhor imagination, distrust all the charms of Eloquence unless capable of mathematical demonstration, and more than all ... be vigorously incredulous"'.
23. Melville, *Life and Letters*, 42.
24. Melville, *Life and Letters*, 105.
25. William C. Lowe, "Bertie, Willoughby, Fourth Earl of Abingdon (1740–1799)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2280, accessed 4 Aug 2016]; on Sandwich and other aristocratic musical amateurs, William Weber, *The Rise of Musical Classics in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 127–130, 147–158. Both Abingdon and Sandwich contributed to the aristocratic tenor of the London music scene described by Simon Veigh in *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
26. P. J. Marshall, "Lyttelton, William Henry, First Baron Lyttelton and First Baron Westcote (1724–1808)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2009 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17311, accessed 4 Aug 2016]; Christine Gerrard, "Lyttelton, George, first Baron Lyttelton (1709–1773)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2009 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17306, accessed 4 Aug 2016].
27. Michael Symes, "William Pitt the Elder: The Gran Mago of Landscape Gardening," *Garden History* 24 (1996), 126–36.
28. The Earl of Abingdon, for instance, was an active politician in the House of Lords for four decades. The Earl of Sandwich was, famously, the first lord of the Admiralty. Henry Cavendish (1731–1810), a duke's grandson, is an interesting case: a great scientist, he was socially ill at ease; his life was nonetheless embroiled in the public science of the later eighteenth century.
29. Weber, *The Rise of Musical Classics*, 147.
30. Jason Kelly, *The Society of Dilettanti: Archaeology and Identity in the British Enlightenment* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), xii.
31. Lawrence E. Klein, "Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century," *Historical Journal* 45 (2002), 869–98.
32. Edgar Wind, "Shaftesbury as a Patron of Art," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 2 (1938), 185–8.
33. Bonamy Dobrée, *The Letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield*, 6 vols. (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1932), IV, 1420.
34. Alderman Beckford suggested both the expectation and the disappointment in a letter to John Kirke, 1754, quoted in Gauci, *William Beckford*, 77: 'I had much rather shew all the respect and regard in my power to a lover of liberty and his country (although poor) than to the first nobleman in the kingdom who had barter'd away the freedoms of the people and his own independency, for the sake of empty titles or the lucre of place, pension or employment.'
35. Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford*, II, 321.
36. Melville, *Life and Letters*, 24. Beckford admired the elder Pitt but dismissed both the younger Pitt and Charles James Fox (Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford*, II, 241).
37. In *Italy, with Sketches of Spain and Portugal* (1834), in Malcolm Jack, ed., *Vathek and Other Stories: A William Beckford Reader* (London: William Pickering, 1993), 253.
38. Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, 145.

39. Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, 151, 218–9; Melville, *Life and Letters*, 350; Peter Kitson, "'Candid Reflections': The Idea of Race in the Debate over the Slave Trade and Slavery in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century," in *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and its Colonies, 1760–1838*, ed. Brycchan Carey, Markman Ellis and Sara Salih (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 11–25; Simon Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 125–44; M. H. Port and R. G. Thorne, "BECKFORD, William (1760–1844), of Fonthill, nr. Hindon, Wilts.," The History of Parliament Online (http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/beckford-william-1760-1844; 7 October 2017).
40. Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, 138; Mowl, "William Beckford," 28; Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford*, I, 202, II, 103.
41. Gauci, *William Beckford*, 140, tells us that, when Fonthill burned in 1755, a contemporary noted that the loss of a country house could have a devastating impact on the local economy: prior to the fire, Beckford had pumped £5,000 per annum 'in improvements … whereby the poor labourers of the several neighbouring parishes have been constantly employed and their families happily supported'.
42. Thomas Martyn, *The English Connoisseur: Containing an Account of Whatever Is Curious in Painting, Sculpture, &c. in the Palaces and Seats of the Nobility and Principal Gentry of England, Both in Town and Country*, 2 vols. (London: For L. Davis and C. Reymers, 1766), I, vii.
43. Thomas Mortimer, *The Universal Director; or, the Nobleman and Gentleman's True Guide to the Masters and Professors of the Liberal and Polite Arts and Sciences; and of the Mechanic Arts, Manufactures, and Trades, Established in London and Westminster, and Their Environs* (London: for J. Coote, 1763), v.
44. Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, 168–70.
45. Lawrence E. Klein, "Sociability, Politeness, and Aristocratic Self-Formation in the Life and Career of the Second Earl of Shelburne," *Historical Journal* 55 (2012), 653–77, at 674. Even Joseph Priestley acknowledged that 'inequality of condition is not without its use'. Priestley strongly admired the 'middle classes of life'. But he noted that when 'persons of higher life' evade the considerable drawbacks of their ego-bolstering education, they 'can lose sight of [themselves], and truly feel and act for others' – a character he called 'godlike': Joseph Priestley, "Memoirs of Dr Priestley," in *The Theological and Miscellaneous Works of Joseph Priestley*, 25 vols., ed. John Towill Rutt (London: G. Smallfield, 1817–32), I, 205–6.
46. Amanda Goodrich, *Debating England's Aristocracy in the 1790s: Pamphlets, Polemics and Political Ideas* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press for the Royal Historical Society, 2005), 29–46, 90–105; Klein, "Sociability, Politeness and Aristocratic Self-Formation," 660.
47. William Hazlitt, most notably, in *Criticisms on Art* (London: John Templeman, 1843), 284–99; also, Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, 246, 251.
48. Melville, *Life and Letters*, 238.

## Chapter 16

1. John Martin Robinson, *James Wyatt (1746–1813): Architect to George III* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 237–8.
2. *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. LXXI, 1, March 1801, 206–8, and April 1801, 297–8.
3. John Britton, *Graphical and Literary Illustrations of Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire; with Heraldical and Genealogical Notices of the Beckford Family* (London: 1823), 28.
4. John Britton, *Graphical and Literary*, 28.
5. William Beckford, *Vathek* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3.
6. John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey* (Shaftesbury: 1823), 21; Beckford, *Vathek*, 5, 101.
7. Henry Venn Brown Lansdown, *Recollections of the Late William Beckford of Fonthill, Wilts. And Lansdown, Bath* (Bath: n.d.), 41.
8. For a recent account of *Vathek* in relation to eighteenth-century Orientalism, see Peter J. Kitson, "Oriental Gothic," in *Romantic Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, ed. Dale Townshend and Angela Wright (Edinburgh: 2016), 171. This mixture of Gothic and Classical spaces within Wyatt's Gothic country houses is not irregular: see Matthew M. Reeve and Peter N. Lindfield, "'A Child of Strawberry Hill': Thomas Barrett and Lee Priory, Kent," *The Burlington Magazine* 157, no. December (2015), 836–42.
9. Robinson, *James Wyatt (1746–1813)*, 242–38; John Wilton-Ely, "The Genesis and Evolution of Fonthill Abbey," *Architectural History* 23 (1980), 40–51; Robert J. Gemmett, *William Beckford's Fonthill: Architecture, Landscape and the Arts* (Croydon: Fonthill Media, 2016), 13.
10. W. S. Lewis, "The Genesis of Strawberry Hill," *Metropolitan Museum Studies* 5, no. 1 (1934), 57–92.
11. Cyrus Redding, "Recollections of the Author of 'Vathek'," *The New Monthly Magazine* 71, no. 282 (1844), 149.
12. Redding, "Recollections," 149.

13. *Pencil Sketch of Vathek's Tower* by William Beckford, 1843. Collection of Philip Hewat-Jaboor. The authors would like to thank Amy Frost of Beckford's Tower Archives and Library for bringing this image to our attention, and Philip Hewat-Jaboor for permission to reprint it in this chapter.
14. Redding, "Recollections," 150.
15. W. H. H., "Conversations of the Late W. Beckford, Esq. With Various Friends," *The New Monthly Magazine*, 72, 516.
16. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Beckford d. 9, ff. 1–16, 17–32.
17. For some recent readings of the queerness of Beckford's romance, see: Max Fincher, *Queering Gothic in the Romantic Age* (Basingstoke, 2007); Jeffrey Cass, "Homoerotics and Orientalism in William Beckford's *Vathek*: Liberalism and the Problem of Pederasty," in *Interrogating Orientalism: Contextual Approaches and Pedagogic Practices*, ed. Diane Long Hoeveler and Jeffrey Cass (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2006), 107–20; George E. Haggerty, "Literature and Homosexuality in the Late Eighteenth Century: Walpole, Beckford, and Lewis," *Studies in the Novel* 18 (1986), 341–52.
18. Boyd Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son: A Study of William Beckford* (London: Centaur, 1962), 276.
19. William Chambers, *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (London: n.p., 1772), 31.
20. Christopher Wren, *Parentalia: Or, Memoirs of the Family of the Wrens: Viz., of Matthew, Bishop of Ely, Christopher, Dean of Windsor, Etc. But Chiefly of Sir Christopher Wren in Which Is Contained, Besides His Works, a Great Number of Original Papers and Records* (London: n.p., 1750), 306.
21. William Halfpenny and John Halfpenny, *Chinese and Gothic Architecture Properly Ornamented. Being Twenty New Plans and Elevations, on Twelve Copper-Plates Containing a Great Variety of Magnificent Buildings Accurately Described* (London: n.p., 1752), Preface.
22. For this, see Kitson, "Oriental Gothic," 171, and Gemmett, *William Beckford's Fonthill*, 15.
23. Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, Babb-Beckford no. 101.
24. Horace Walpole, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. William Stanley Lewis and Warren Hunting Smith, vol. 11 (London: 1944), 22.
25. John Britton, *Graphic and Literary Illustrations of Fonthill Abbey*, 39.
26. Sandro Jung, "The Architectural Design of Beckford's Vathek," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 24, no. 2 (2011–12), 302, 306.
27. Beckford, *Vathek*, 84.
28. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Beckford c. 46, f. 35.
29. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Beckford c.46, f.35.
30. Three stories related to the original novel by Beckford but not published together until 1912 by Lewis Melville.
31. William Beckford, *Vathek; an Arabian Tale with Notes Critical and Explanatory* (London: n.p., 1819), vi.
32. Beckford, *Vathek*, 5. This parallels his assessment of the tower at Antwerp Cathedral: Beckford wished 'to stretch myself out upon its very summit, and calculate, from so sublime an elevation, the influence of the planets'. Quoted in Brian Fothergill, *Beckford of Fonthill* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), 130.
33. Fothergill, *Beckford of Fonthill*, 323–5.
34. See Gemmett, *William Beckford's Fonthill*, 23–23.
35. William Beckford, *Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents; in a Series of Letters, from Various Parts of Europe* (London: n.p., 1783), 47.
36. William Beckford, *Dreams,* 107.
37. For the cost of Fonthill's construction, see Gemmett, *William Beckford's Fonthill*, 115, and for the cost of £273,000 see Redding, "Recollections," 155. Concerning Beckford's architectural megalomania, see Wilton-Ely, "The Genesis," 47.
38. Wilton-Ely, "The Genesis," 41; Beckford, *Vathek*, 5–6.
39. London, Royal Institute of British Architects, Sa55/5, 1–2.
40. Nikolaus Pevsner, Bridget Cherry, D. D. A. Simpson and Desmond Bonney, *Wiltshire* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 246.
41. Joseph Farington, *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, *September 1796–December 1798*, vol. 3, ed. Kathryn Cave, Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 916. See Robinson, *James Wyatt (1746–1813)*, 234.
42. New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B1975.4.1880.
43. London, Royal Institute of British Architects, Sa55/5, 3.
44. Wilton-Ely, "The Genesis," 42.
45. Edinburgh, New Register House, Hamilton MS, Beckford Correspondence: William Beckford to Sir Isaac Heard, 21 May 1800.
46. Edinburgh, Beckford to Heard, 21 May 1800.
47. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Beckford c. 29, fol. 171r.
48. Rutter, *Delineations*, 110–11.
49. Rutter, 24.
50. Beckford, *Vathek*, 84–5.

51. Beckford, *Vathek,* 84.
52. Rutter, *Delineations*, 110–11.
53. Beckford, *Vathek*, 86.
54. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Beckford c. 18, f. 15v.
55. Oxford, ff. 17r–v.
56. Oxford, f. 17v.
57. Oxford, f. 18r.
58. Oxford, f. 19v.
59. Redding, "Recollections," 150.

## Chapter 17

1. Begun 1796, collapsed 1825, and subsequently largely demolished.
2. This replaced the first Fonthill House, destroyed by fire in 1755, itself demolished 1807. For an account of the disappearance of the houses on the Fonthill estate, culminating with the demolition of Detmar Blow's 1904 house built for Hugh Morrison (1869–1931), see Simon Blow, "Blow by Blow," *Guardian Weekend*, 24 February 1979, 11. See also this volume, Chapters 4–8.
3. See Derek E. Ostergard, ed., *William Beckford 1760–1844: An Eye for the Magnificent* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press for the Bard Graduate Center, 2001), the catalogue for the eponymous exhibition held at Dulwich College Picture Gallery and at the Bard Graduate Center, New York.
4. Caroline Dakers, *A Genius for Money: Business, Art and the Morrisons* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011).
5. For more on Alfred Morrison, see, for example, Clive Wainwright, "Alfred Morrison: A forgotten Patron and Collector," in *Grosvenor House Art and Antiques Fair Handbook* (London: Burlington Magazine Publications, 1995), and Olivier Hurstel and Martin Levy, "Charles Lepec and the Patronage of Alfred Morrison," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 50 (2015): 194–223.
6. Bet McLeod, "A Collectors' Corner: Aspects of the Beckford Legacy at Hamilton Palace," *Beckford Society Journal* 21 (2014): 24–36; Bet McLeod, "A Collector's Obsession," *Apollo* (June 2010): 52–7.
7. See Ostergard, *William Beckford*, 438–48.
8. The present author gave an overview of Morrison as a collector in a lecture, "Alfred Morrison (1821–97): An Overlooked Patron and Collector of Decorative Arts," Art Institute of Chicago, 10 May 2016.
9. "Treasure-hunting: Recovering Beckford's Collections," given by the present author and Philip Hewat-Jaboor. The symposium was held at Central Saint Martins, London, and at Fonthill.
10. Accession number W.13:1-1980.
11. Ostergard, *William Beckford*, 64.
12. See Clive Wainwright, *The Romantic Interior (*New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 126, fig. 107. Two of the ten cabinets are at Charlecote Park.
13. Phillips, 23 September–22 October 1823, lot 1347 (£252) to Robert Hume; Robert, 2nd Earl Grosvenor, and by descent; Christie's (London), 5 July 2012, lot 12. The catalogue entry for the sale at Christie's was based on information supplied by Bet McLeod. Earl Grosvenor was buying land in Dorset, close to Fonthill, early in the nineteenth century, and his son Richard acquired the Fonthill Abbey estate.
14. Christie's (London), *Important Silver and Objects of Vertu*, 6 December 1989, lot 208.
15. See Michael Jaffé, "William Beckford's Lapis-Lazuli Cup," in *National Art Collections Fund Review* (1990): 124–7. Also see Ostergard, *William Beckford*, 39.
16. Christie's, South Kensington, 20 September 1994, lots 70–3. Among other lots from the sale, a tazza entitled *La Fantaisie* is now in the collection of the Saint Louis Art Museum (Hurstel and Levy, "Charles Lepec," figs. 6–8), and two plates are divided between the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (Hurstel and Levy, "Charles Lepec," figs. 8 and 12) and the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Limoges (Hurstel and Levy, "Charles Lepec," figs. 8 and 11).
17. See Hurstel and Levy, "Charles Lepec," 196, quoting Daniel Alcouffe.
18. Hurstel and Levy, "Charles Lepec," 194–223.
19. Ostergard, *William Beckford*, 88.
20. Ostergard, *William Beckford,* 53.
21. Dukes, Dorchester, 27 September 2012, lot 986.
22. Ostergard, *William Beckford*, 63.
23. Bodleian Library, MS Beckford, c. 58, Inventory, compiled by English & Son of Bath and R. Hume of London, 1844, Book 2, p. 31 (within a large compilation of items under the heading 'Various Oriental & Other China mounted chiefly in Silver Gilt'): 'A Brown & White Coffee pot. Tea cup and saucer – lined – very rich.'

24. Hamilton Muniments, Hamilton District Library, NRA (S) 3438, Hamilton Palace Inventory 1876, Tapestry Rooms, Sitting Room, 'Articles of Vertu in Ebony and Pietra Dura Cabinet, from the Beckford Collection': A small China Cup & Saucer Chocolate Ground with raised white Flowers, both lined with silver gilt and engraved.
25. Ostergard, *William Beckford*,148.
26. Other furniture from the 1820s and1830s, all of fine oak and some with gilded wood and metal embellishments, has emerged over the past few decades: this includes a wall cabinet probably from Lansdown Tower, acquired by a private collector at Sotheby's in the 1970s; a hanging cabinet identified in a private collection, probably from Lansdown Crescent, now at Lansdown Tower, and a pair of pier cabinets identified at Kivells, Holsworthy, Devon, 16 December 2014, lot 33.
27. See Caroline Dakers, "Furniture and Interior Decoration for James and Alfred Morrison," *Furniture History* XLVI (2010): 197 and fig. 11.
28. Edmund English and Willes Maddox (illustrations), *Views of Lansdown Tower, Bath* (Bath: E. English and London: T. McLean, 1844), pl. 4.
29. Lansdown Tower sale, English and Son, 20 November 1845 and following seven days, day seven, lot 500.
30. Bet McLeod, "Some Further Objects from William Beckford's Collection in the Victoria and Albert Museum," *The Burlington Magazine* CXLIII, no. 1179 (June 2001): 367–70.
31. Marbles identified by Robin Sanderson, 2002.
32. *The Builder*, 9 May 1874, 385.
33. Fine Art Society, *Spring '84* (London: Fine Art Society), 40. Another element from the room that passed anonymously through Christie's South Kensington in the late 1970s was the narrow cabinet, still in the John Scott collection, exhibited by the Fine Art Society in *Architect-Designers: Pugin to Mackintosh* (London: Fine Art Society and Haslam & Whiteway, 1981), 12–13. More recently, the Toledo Museum of Art (2006) acquired an identical cabinet, and a private collector acquired a larger cabinet, lacking some elements, also from Christie's South Kensington, 13 November 2007, lot 159.
34. Plymouth Auction Rooms, 5 November 2014, lots 291 and 292.

## Chapter 18

1. 'Approximate Estimate' dated 29 March 1902. Fonthill Estate Archives, M/2/1416. Additional costs included the architect's fees at £350 and a clerk of works at £150.
2. Fonthill Estate Archives, M/01 1379.
3. Draft letter from Hugh Morrison to Mr Squarey of Lawrence and Squarey, Salisbury, on the back of the estimate dated 29 March 1902.
4. W. R. Lethaby, *Philip Webb and His Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), 122.
5. Sydney Blow, *The Ghost Walks on Fridays* (London: Heath Cranton, 1935), 106.
6. W. R. Lethaby, A. H. Powell and F. L. Griggs, *Ernest Gimson: His Life and Work* (Stratford on Avon: Shakespeare Head Press, 1924), 8.
7. Michael Drury, *Wandering Architects* (Stamford: Shaun Tyas, 2000, rev. edn 2015).
8. Edith Olivier, *Four Victorian Ladies of Wiltshire* (London: Faber & Faber, 1945), 62.
9. See for example *The Times*, 9 April 1901.
10. Basil Stallybrass, "Discoveries Near Fonthill," *Wiltshire Archaeology and Natural History Magazine,* 34, 414.
11. Mark Bowden, *Pitt Rivers: The Life and Archaeological Work of Lieutenant-General Augustus Lane Fox Pitt Rivers DCL FRS FSA* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 163.
12. Lawrence Weaver (attributed), "Little Ridge, Wiltshire, a Seat of Mr Hugh Morrison," *Country Life* (26 October 1912), 570–1.
13. Stallybrass, "Discoveries Near Fonthill," 414.
14. Weaver, "Little Ridge," 568.
15. Weaver, "Little Ridge," 573; 'The dining room is lined with oak panelling, with lightly-carved stiles, that recalls the days of the old manor house. A recessed cupboard, still standing in its ruinous walls, had formed a cache where a remnant of old panelling was discovered surviving. This was faithfully reproduced – Stephens, the joiner, with his men, carrying out the work to perfection by treating in traditional manner oak from trees felled long before in the park and seasoned in the estate yard.'
16. Weaver, "Little Ridge," 573. Stallybrass 'was assisted by most capable local men – by Charles Lamb and his son, of an old race of plasterers who could model and cast anything, and who, though seemingly spoilt by modern influences, were only too ready to be brought back to the right traditional lines; and so enthusiastic

did they become over this effective but inexpensive form of decoration, that they perhaps outstrode the imagination of their forbears in the craft.'
17. Weaver, "Little Ridge," 573.
18. Fonthill Estate Archives, M/02 1416.
19. Stallybrass, "Discoveries Near Fonthill," 422.
20. Fonthill Estate Archives, M/01 1379.
21. Fonthill Estate Archives, M/01 1384.
22. Blow drawings, RIBA Drawing Collection, T424.
23. This and subsequent references are taken from Fonthill Estate Archives, S/7/1926.
24. Lord Margadale to Mrs S. Wills, 15 November 1971, Fonthill Estate Archives, S/7/1926.
25. Robin Young, "How Fonthill was Missed," *The Times Diary*, 12 June 1972.
26. Young, "How Fonthill was Missed."
27. Lord Margadale to Peter Walker, Secretary of State to the Environment, 12 June 1972, Fonthill Estate Archives, S/7/1926.
28. Letter from Edwin Lutyens to his wife dated 24 August 1917, quoted by Clayre Percy and Jane Ridley (eds), *Letters of Edwin Lutyens* (London: Collins, 1985), 354.
29. Simon Blow, "A Blow by Blow Account of a Duke's Desertion," *The Spectator* (25 January 1986), 22.

## Chapter 19

1. Alison Smithson, "In the Time of the Presentation of Upper Lawn Book: Barcelona," unpublished lecture, December 1986, Smithson Family Collection.
2. See Max Risselada and Dirk van den Heuvel (eds), *Team 10 1953–1981: In Search of A Utopia of the Present* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2005).
3. See Max Risselada, "The Pavilion – Upper Lawn, Fonthill Estate," in *Alison & Peter Smithson, From the House of the Future to a house of today*, ed. Dirk van den Heuvel and Max Risselada (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2004), 152; Dean Hawkes, "The Architecture of Climate: Studies in Environmental History, Smythson and the Smithsons," Proceedings of 25th Conference on Passive and Low Energy Architecture (PLEA), Dublin, 2008. Downloaded 17 September 2017, http://www.academia.edu/16937507/Paper_No_151_The_Architecture_of_Climate_Studies_in_environmental_history_Smythson_and_the_Smithsons; Lorenzo Wong, Peter Salter and Peter Smithson, *Climate Register: Four Works by Alison and Peter Smithson* (London: Architectural Association, 1994); Rocio Escandon, Juan Jose Sendra and Rafael Suarez, "Energy and Climate Simulation in the Upper Lawn Pavilion, an Experimental Laboratory in the Architecture of the Smithsons," *Building Simulation* 8 no. 1 (February 2015): 99–110.
4. The only other monograph of the house to be written permits Beckford and his presence at Fonthill a single paragraph; Bruno Krucker, *Complex Ordinariness: The Upper Lawn Pavilion by Alison and Peter Smithson*, (Zurich: gta Verlag, 2002), 29.
5. Alison and Peter Smithson, *Upper Lawn Solar Pavilion Folly* (Barcelona: Edicions de la Universitat Politecnica de Catalunya, 1986). The book is largely written and compiled by Alison, with assistance from Enric Miralles.
6. Smithson and Smithson, *Upper Lawn*, 28.
7. Bruno Krucker in conversation with Peter Smithson, *Complex Ordinariness*, 29.
8. Smithson and Smithson, *Upper Lawn*, 15.
9. Peter Smithson, 13 October 1985, *Upper Lawn*, 9.
10. Smithson and Smithson, *Upper Lawn*, 9.
11. Alison Smithson's notes for *Upper Lawn* publication, Smithson Family Archive.
12. Wednesday 30 May 1787, *The Journals of William Beckford in Portugal and Spain 1787–1788*, ed. Boyd Alexander (London: Hart-Davis, 1955), 41.
13. See Ben Highmore, "Rough Poetry: *Patio and Pavilion* Revisited," in *Alison & Peter Smithson: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Max Risselada (Barcelona: Poligrafa, 2011), 124–48.
14. "Patio and Pavilion," reprinted in Alison and Peter Smithson, *Changing the Art of Inhabitation: Mies' Pieces, Eames' Dreams, The Smithsons* (London: Artemis, 1994), 109.
15. Smithson and Smithson, *Upper Lawn*, 16.
16. Smithson and Smithson, *Upper Lawn*, 1617. Original Smithson Family Archive.
17. Alison Smithson, "Three Pavilions of the Twentieth Century: the Farnsworth, the Eames, Upper Lawn," lecture given in 1985, published in Smithson and Smithson, *Changing the Art of Inhabitation*, 141.
18. Peter's thoughts on 'Life in a polythene bag' are printed in Smithson and Smithson, *Upper Lawn*, 22.
19. Alison Smithson, "Upper Lawn Cottage: Aims," Smithson Family Collection. See also Smithson and Smithson, *Upper Lawn*, 20.

20. Smithson and Smithson, *Upper Lawn*, 24.
21. Smithson, "Three Pavilions," 141.
22. Smithson, "In the time of the Presentation of Upper Lawn Book," op. cit. Alison Smithson's interest in Saint Jerome is explored by Max Risselada in van den Heuvel and Risselada, *Alison & Peter Smithson, From the House of the Future to a house of today*, 54.
23. Smithson, "Three Pavilions," 142.
24. Text from the original pamphlet is reprinted in van den Heuvel and Risselada, *Alison & Peter Smithson*, 224–9.
25. Van den Heuvel and Risselada, *Alison & Peter Smithson*, 227.
26. Beckford owned *St. Jerome Awakened from a Trance by an Angel Sounding a Trumpet* by Guercino, as noted by John Britton in *Beauties of Wiltshire* (London: Vernor and Hood, 1801), 226. He also owned pictures of the saint by Domenichino and Veronese.
27. Smithson, "Three Pavilions," 141.
28. Smithson, "In the Time of the Presentation of Upper Lawn Book."
29. Alison Smithson and Peter Smithson, "Pavilion and Route," *Architectural Design* (March 1965): 143–6.
30. Smithson, "Three Pavilions," 142.
31. Upper Lawn Journals, in Smithson Family Archive. Extracts printed in Smithson and Smithson, *Upper Lawn*, 28–60.
32. Alison Smithson, *AS in DS – An Eye on the Road (*Delft University Press, 1983, reprinted Zurich: Lars Muller, 2001).
33. Upper Lawn was restored in 2001 by Sergison Bates Architects; see Jonathan Sergison & Stephen Bates, *Papers 2: Sergison Bates Architects* (London: Sergison Bates Architects, 2007) and Jonathan Sergison and Stephen Bates, "Upper Lawn: The Invisible Restoration," in *2G:34 Sergison Bates* (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 2005), 92–105.
34. Published in Smithson and Smithson, *Upper Lawn*, 26. The original is believed to be in the Smithson Family Collection but has not yet been located.