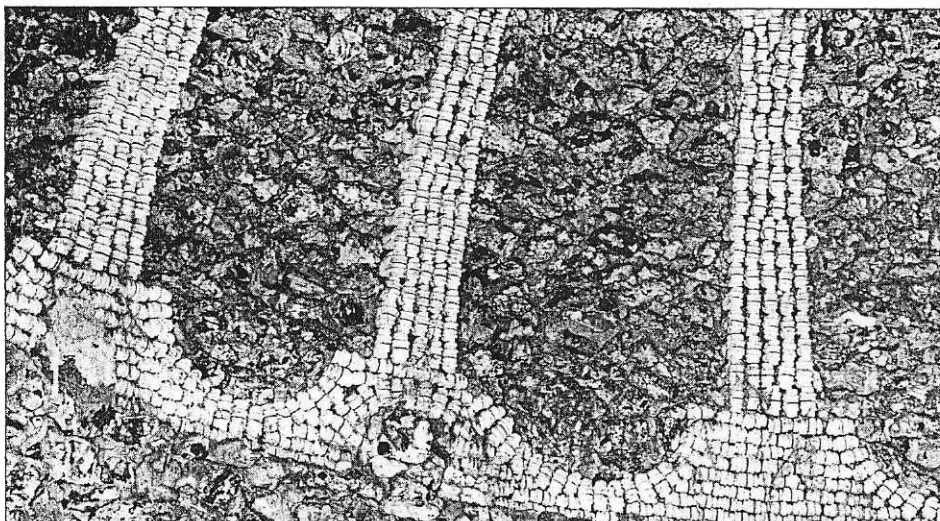
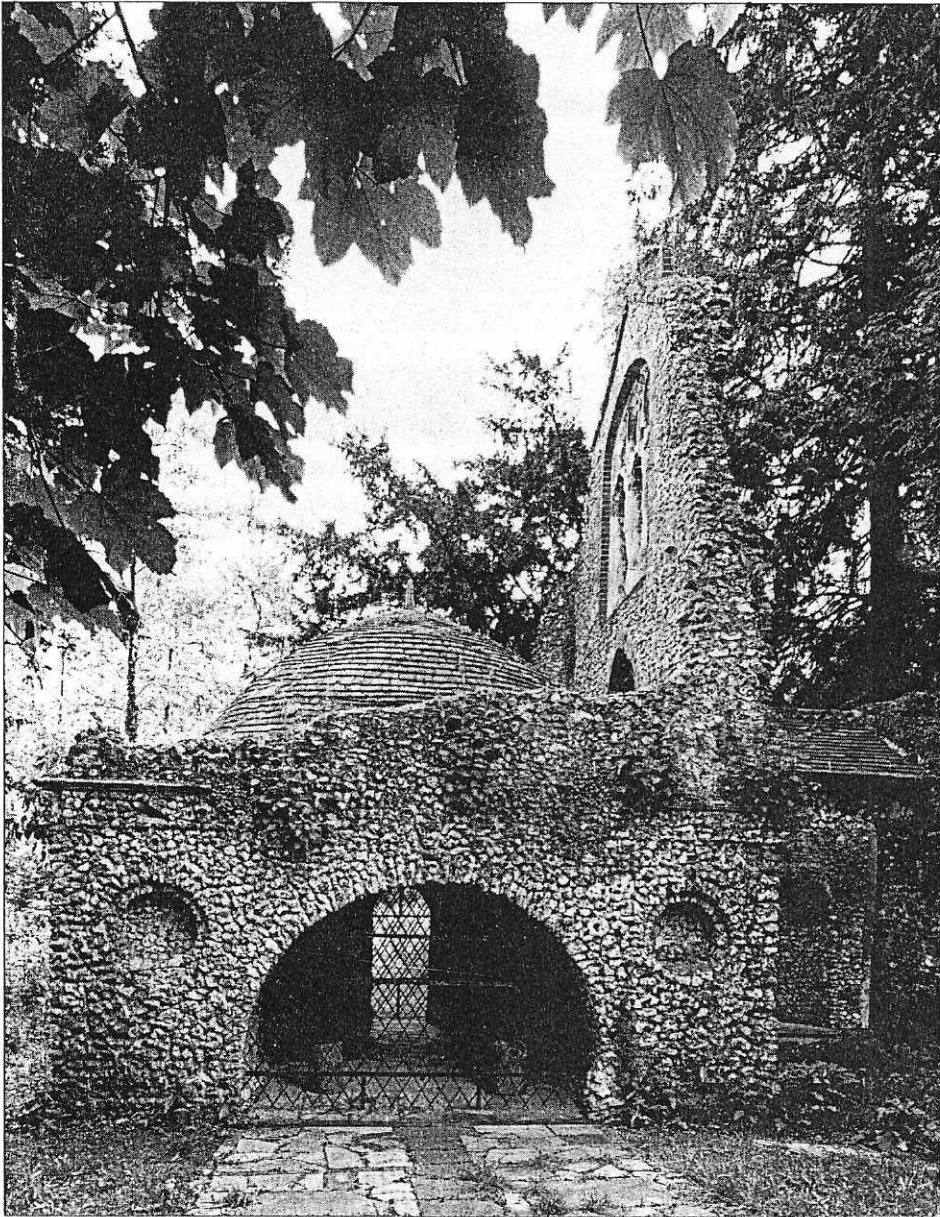


THE FOLLY AND THE MAUSOLEUM

by GEOFFREY TYACK



GARDEN buildings and mausolea deserve a prominent place in the history of 18th-century English architecture. In these often enigmatic structures architects could freely explore new styles and design methods. One such architect was John Freeman, squire of Fawley in Buckinghamshire. His tiny *oeuvre* contains not only the first securely datable Gothick garden building in England, but also what is arguably the first neo-Classical mausoleum. These buildings deserve to be better known for their unusually adventurous and experimental character.

Born John Cook, Freeman was at first destined for the East India trade, but in 1707 he inherited the Fawley estate from his uncle and changed his surname. Thus, at 18, he became owner of Fawley Court, a house built in 1688, with grounds flanking one of the most attractive stretches of the Thames, that now serves as the Henley regatta course. Before long he made the acquaintance of Edmund Waller of Hall Barn, near Beaconsfield, who was currently laying out his grounds with the assistance of his stepfather, John Aislable, best known for his later creation of the superb garden at Studley Royal in Yorkshire. It seems likely that Waller and Aislable were responsible for kindling Freeman's aesthetic interests.

These interests became apparent in 1720, when Freeman and Waller bought some of the Arundel Marbles. This celebrated collection of antique statuary had been dispersed by Arundel's descendants, and some of the pieces were taken to the popular Cuper's (or Cupid's) Garden, on London's South Bank. The collection was divided between Hall Barn and Fawley, and a few years later Freeman began remodelling his own grounds to provide a suitably arcadian setting for his house and sculptures. A recently discovered plan dated 1763 shows that Freeman's garden, with plantations and a rectangular canal, had much in common with both Hall Barn and Studley Royal, and it may well be that Aislable's influence lies behind some of the features at Fawley.

The gardens at Fawley have been much altered, and today Freeman's layout is almost unrecognisable. But among vestiges of the original adornments is an intriguing survival: a circular, domed building of flint with a false front in the Gothick style (Fig 4). This was almost certainly designed by Freeman himself, and two of the preliminary drawings for the façade have recently come to light (Fig 3). Hidden among later plantations, this strange edifice has been dismissed by the few who have written about it as an unremarkable garden folly. In fact, it deserves wider recognition, not only for its intrinsic qualities, but also for its remarkably early date.

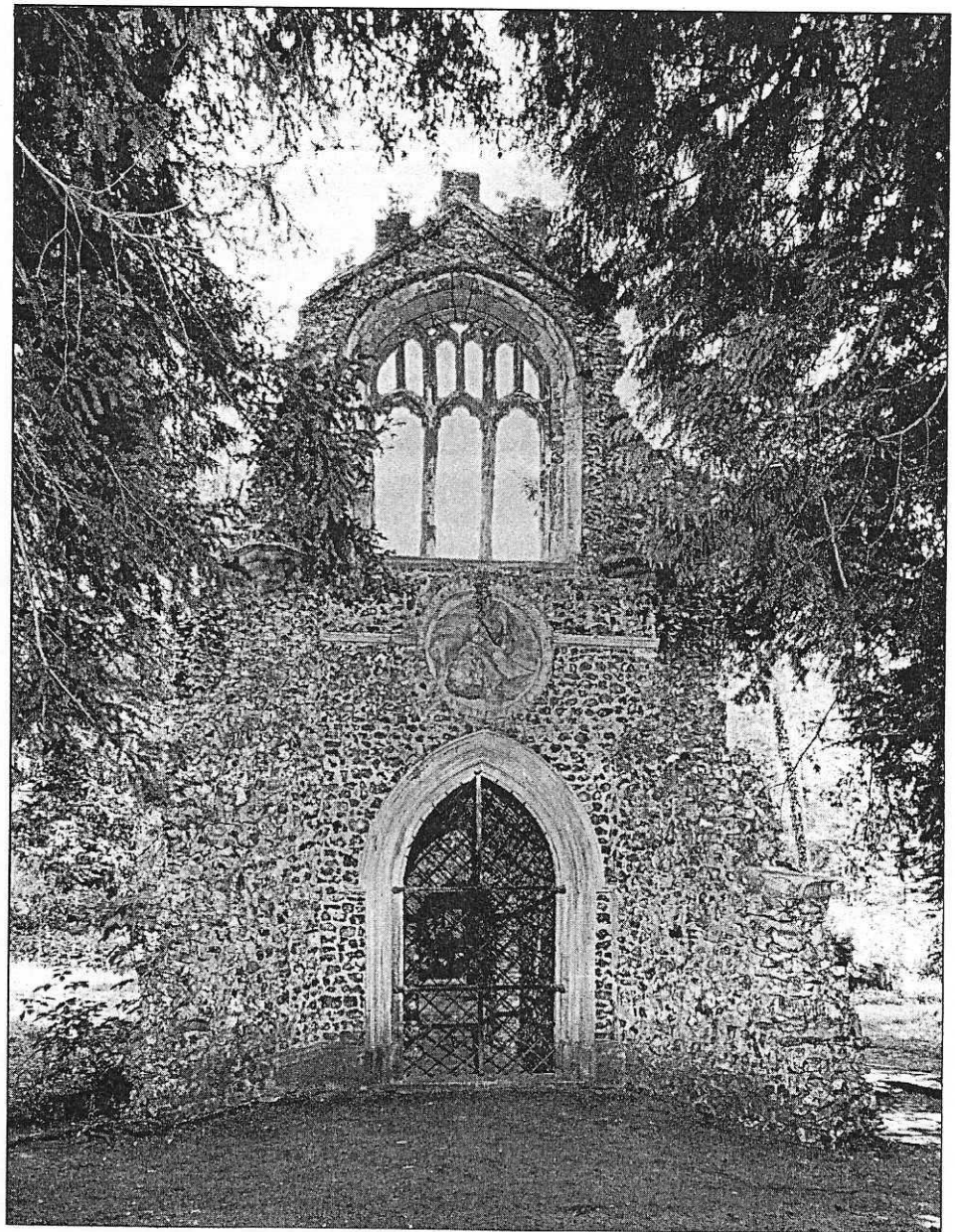
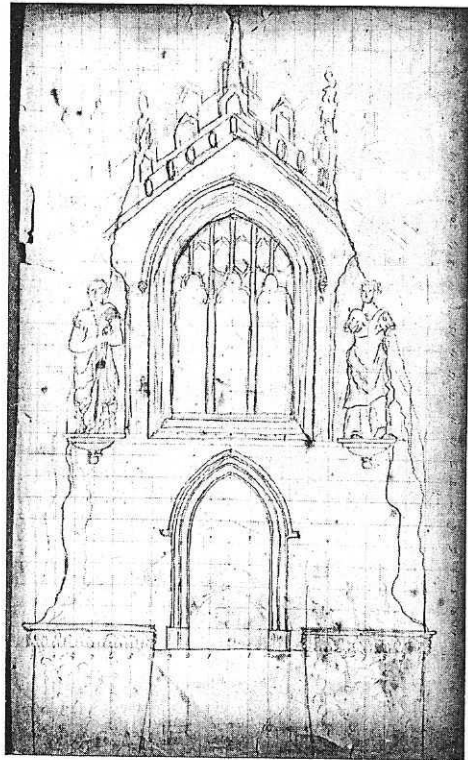
The date is fixed by a reference in the recently published journals of the antiquarian John Loveday of Caversham, near Reading. Loveday visited Fawley in 1732 and wrote

1—The Gothick "chapel" was built in the garden of Fawley Court by John Freeman before 1732, making it one of the very earliest examples of that style. (Left) 2—The use of flint and of knuckle bone emphasises the primitive nature of the building

Gothick and neo-Classical are often seen as antitheses in 18th-century architecture. But this was not necessarily the case, as can be seen in the garden building and mausoleum of John Freeman, which he designed himself, at Fawley Court in Buckinghamshire, in the early 18th century.

that "the Gardens are beautiful and have pretty Canals; at the end of a close Walk between the trees is a Ruin of Flints erected about an year since, with a very good effect; it represents the Eastern or Western Windows of a Chappel".

His remarks establish the "ruin" at Fawley as one of the first Gothick garden buildings in England, and therefore anywhere, anticipating the efforts of Batty Langley and Sanderson Miller by more than 10 years. If the castellated buildings at Stainborough (Wentworth Castle) and Castle Howard in Yorkshire are discounted, the earliest garden structures to display Gothick mouldings and details are usually reckoned to be the "temple" which terminates the view from the house at Shotover Park, Oxfordshire, and "Alfred's Hall" in the woods of



3 and 4—The "chapel" was almost certainly designed by Freeman himself. The figures in the preliminary drawing (left) allude to the Arundel Marbles, some of which Freeman owned. John Loveday records that the building was decorated with Roman antiques

Lord Bathurst's Cirencester Park, Gloucestershire. Shotover has been dated to about 1718, although without documentary corroboration; Alfred's Hall in its present form is a remodelling in stone, carried out in 1732, of an earlier "Wood House" described by Mrs Delaney as "not a bit better than an *Irish cabbin*". So Freeman's building at Fawley is the beginning of a line of development which was to culminate in the extravagancies of Fonthill and elsewhere.

The interest of the Fawley building, however, stems as much from its purpose as from its early date. The gardens of the 1720s and '30s were intended to be realisations of ideal beauty, and their buildings were designed to convey messages through architectural signs and symbols. What message was Freeman trying to convey

when he chose to construct a garden building in the Gothick style? The answer lies in the fact that the "temple" was built to house some of the recently purchased Arundel Marbles. When John Loveday went there in 1732 he recorded that on each side of the entrance there were "two really antique and mutilated figures, the drapery of one very good, the other more defaced . . . behind this is an arched Room, the outside of it has in Niches some Bustos of Antiquity and some of the Ornaments are the Bowls of Tobacco Pipes ranged in Rows".

This description corresponds to a sketch design for the façade, presumably by Freeman himself (Fig 3). It also fits the building as it is today, which survives intact, apart from the statuary, which has been dispersed (Fig 4). The plinths on either side

of the doorway originally supported draped figures of Hellenistic character which came from the Arundel collection, while a roundel over the entrance housed a fragment of the frieze of the Great Altar of Pergamon. Clearly, Freeman wanted to create an architectural synthesis of Gothick and Classical, as Sir Roger Newdigate was later to do in the hall at Arbury Hall, Warwickshire, where Roman figures rest within Gothick niches.

At Fawley the Gothick note is struck by the façade with its pointed-arched entrance and Perpendicular window, with tracery so "correct" that Pevsner assumed that it must have come from the parish church (this is unlikely as the folly was built 17 years before Freeman remodelled the church). The domed core of the building (Fig 1) alludes, however, to Classical antiquity, albeit in the primitive

form also employed in the grotto at Stourhead. The primitive effect is enhanced by the use of flint as a building material, and by the introduction of knucklebones on the ceiling and pebbles and sheep's trotters on the floor (Fig 2). In its complete form, with statuary, the building seems to have been intended to convey a sense of a lost Elysium in which Rome and Britain joined hands across the centuries.

Freeman's choice of a Gothick setting for his Roman statuary seems less perverse if one bears in mind the style's historical and patriotic connotations. Mavis Batey has

strength; a melancholy but not unpleasing thought". Within its shady grove, the Fawley "ruin" may well represent the first architectural manifestation of the "pleasures of melancholy", celebrated a century earlier by Milton, and subsequently in poems like Young's *Night Thoughts* and Gray's *Elegy*.

Freeman's garden at Fawley formed part of an ambitious scheme, designed, it seems, to leave his mark on the whole estate. In 1730 he added a circular tower to Round House Farm in the hills above Fawley Court, presumably in an attempt to impart a "Claudian" flavour, evoking the vernacular

architecture of Tuscany; this virtually unknown building antedates John Nash's Italianate villas by more than 70 years. The following year he mounted an archaeological hoax when he made a fake "long barrow" in Henley Park, above Fawley, leaving a Latin inscription inside to be discovered when the "barrow" was excavated in 1932. Such schemes may have been in his mind when he told a friend in 1732 that he was "planting trees, making theatres & building castles in the air" on the estate: creating, in other words, an Arcadia in the Chilterns.

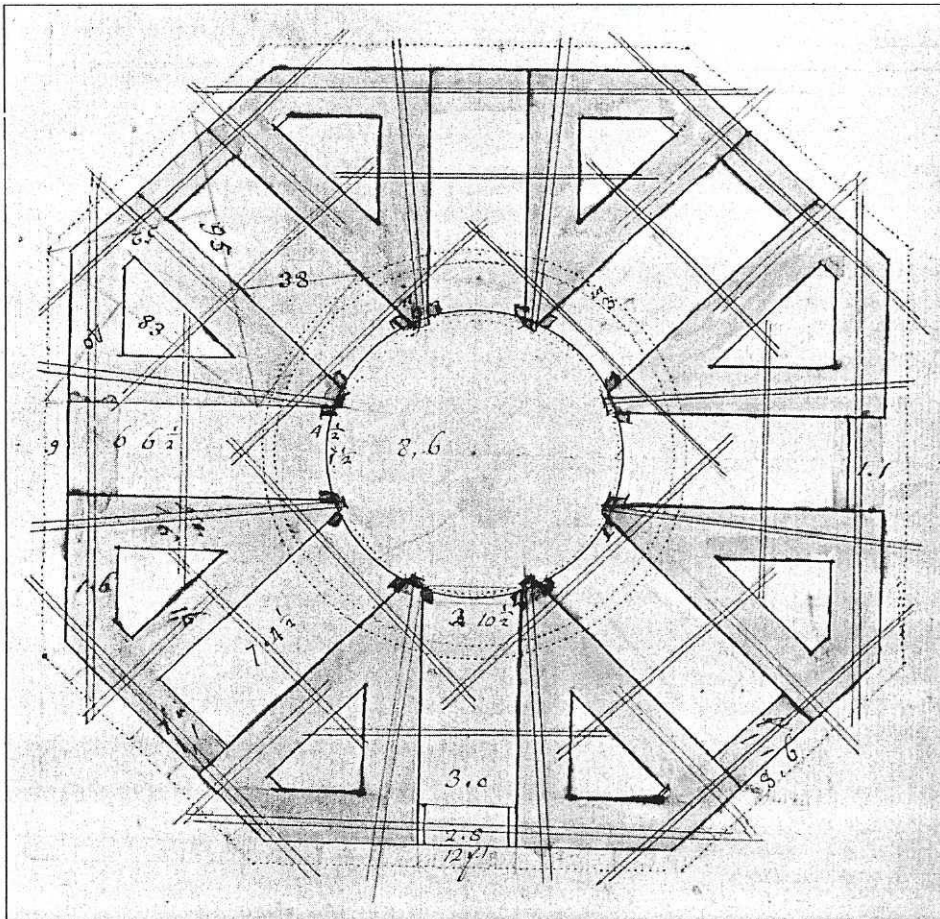
Despite these diversions, Freeman remained an enthusiast for Classical architecture. He had an extensive architectural library, and strongly supported the efforts of the Burlington circle to "purify" public taste. He also encouraged his friend George Morton Pitt, governor of Fort St George in Madras, in his efforts to introduce Classical architecture to the Indian subcontinent, sending him a copy of Kent's *Designs of Inigo Jones* hot from the press in 1728, and telling him two years later that Burlington's villa at Chiswick was "very antique & a fit model for a larger thing as I don't doubt yours will be".

Freeman demonstrated his understanding of neo-Palladian architectural thought at the very end of his life in 1751 when he added a new octagonal saloon to the late-17th-century Honington Hall in Warwickshire for his friend Joseph Townshend, MP for Wallingford. This impressive room was created in the space formerly occupied by the staircase, on the main axis of the house, and it introduced, for almost the first time in English country-house architecture, a motif which was to be used repeatedly in the second half of the 18th century: the octagonal room projecting from the walls of the house in the form of a canted bay.

But the most striking monument to Freeman's Roman preoccupations is his mausoleum in a shady corner of the churchyard at Fawley, high in the Chiltern woods, two miles from Fawley Court (Fig 7). Freeman was patron of the living at Fawley, and remodelled the church in 1748, introducing woodwork from the recently demolished chapel at Cannons, Middlesex. The decision to build a mausoleum, still an uncommon adjunct to a church, stemmed from the fact that the mortuary chapel attached to the church was still in the hands of the Whitelocke family, whose ancestors had been lords of the manor in the 17th century. Freeman could thus guarantee a kind of immortality for his family, and at the same time indulge his fascination with Roman antiquity.

The idea of a mausoleum could not help but conjure up Classical associations in 18th-century minds. Wren, Hawksmoor and Gibbs had all experimented with Classical and Renaissance prototypes, but Freeman's mausoleum was strikingly different from anything built in England before. His first idea was for an obelisk over a square rusticated base, and a design has recently come to light, almost certainly from the hand of William Kent. But it was soon discarded in favour of one based more directly on Roman funerary precedents.

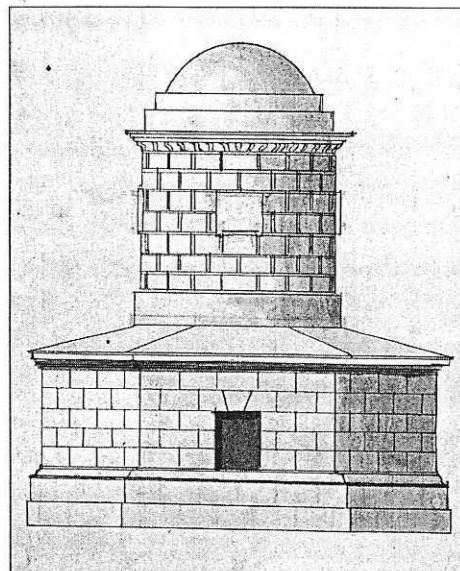
There is no indication that Freeman visited Rome, although his son, Sambrooke Freeman, did so, and made a drawing of the well-known tomb of Cecilia Metella on the Appian Way in his *Grand Tour* notebook in 1746 (Fig 8). This and other Roman funerary monuments could also be studied in Pietro Bartoli's *Gli Antichi Sepolchri*,



5—Working drawing for the base of the mausoleum at Fawley. (Below) 6—Design by Freeman for the mausoleum, which was built to his plans in 1750

argued convincingly that the Gothick temple at Shotover was intended to symbolise the medieval origins of England's liberties, liberties which were held especially dear by Whigs like James Tyrell who commissioned the building and laid out the grounds. Aislabie, another Whig, showed a precocious interest in the appreciation of old buildings. He designed the gardens at Studley Royal to include a view of the neighbouring Fountains Abbey and built himself a house at Waverley, Surrey, overlooking the remains of England's first Cistercian abbey; in 1719 he led a campaign to preserve the early-16th-century Holbein Gate in Whitehall. In his garden at Fawley, Freeman may well have wanted to link the idea of English liberty with the inheritance of Classical antiquity, and the purchase of the Arundel Marbles allowed him to do so in a visually powerful way.

His decision to give his "temple" a ruined façade was also significant. Lord Kames later wrote that Gothick ruins exhibited "the triumph of time over



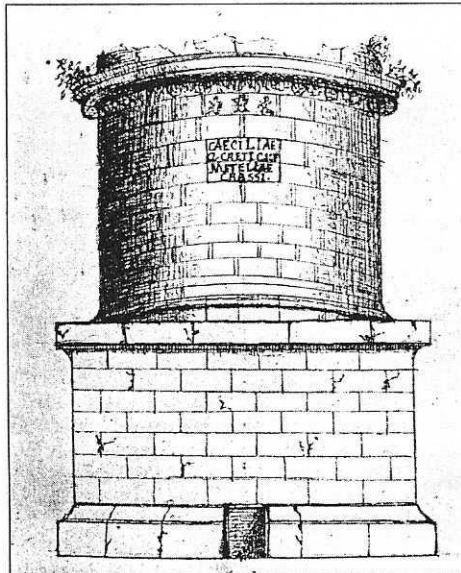


7—The mausoleum is a particularly pure and important example of neo-Classicism. (Below) 8—Sketch of the tomb of Cecilia Metella, done by Freeman's son on his Grand Tour in 1746. This was an important influence on the design of the Fawley mausoleum

published in Rome in 1697 and reissued in a revised form as *Veterum Sepulchra seu Mausolea Romanorum et Etruscorum* in 1728.

It has usually been assumed that the Fawley mausoleum is based on the Cecilia Metella monument, but there are several differences, notably in the shape of the base and in its relationship to the cylindrical superstructure. A closer precedent is to be found in Giovanni Battista Montano's *Scelta di Varii Tempietti Antichi* (Rome, 1624), a copy of which he had in his library. This strange volume shows conjectural reconstructions of Roman tombs, and the Freeman papers in the Gloucester County Record Office contain pencil drawings of two of Montano's plates, which clearly influenced the final design.

In its final form the mausoleum consists of a plain domed cylinder resting on an octagonal rusticated base. There is no display of the orders, and no allusion to Renaissance models. The mausoleum was built in 1750 of large blocks of Portland stone, and the grim interior contains rows of shelves. Freeman obviously wanted the



structure to express, through architectural means, a stoical resignation in the face of death worthy of the Romans themselves. In designing it he found himself experimenting with pure, abstract form, and in so doing he created one of the first monuments of English neo-Classicism.

Freeman's building activities cast an interesting light on 18th-century architectural taste. We are perhaps too inclined to think of Gothick and Classical as being in some way mutually exclusive. In fact, to the Georgians as much as to the Victorians, different styles could be chosen to convey different meanings. Freeman's buildings remind us that in their origins the Gothic Revival and neo-Classicism grew out of a single motive: to convey, by the most appropriate means available, the expressive power of architecture.

Acknowledgments: Mavis Batey, Howard Colvin, John Piper, Gloucester Record Office.

Illustrations: 3, Ashmolean Museum; 5, 6, 8 Gloucester Records Office.

Photographs: Jonathan M. Gibson.