

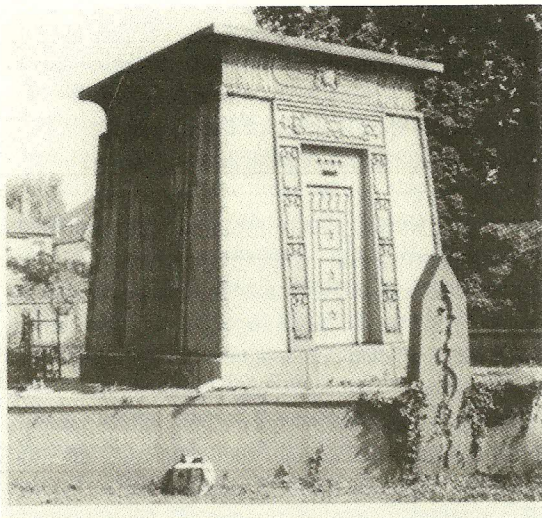
MMT News

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Newsletter of The Mausolea and Monuments Trust, Registered Charity No. 1063416

The House that 'Black Jack' Built

Derrick Mercer recounts the bizarre history of the Kilmorey Mausoleum, one of Richmond's lesser-known architectural delights.



On most days one of the most interesting historic buildings in Richmond-upon-Thames can only be seen from the top deck of a double-decker bus. The Kilmorey Mausoleum hides behind a high brick wall along St Margaret's Road, Twickenham, and is only accessible on one day a year when, along with other historic and architecturally interesting buildings, it opens its doors for the Open House weekend.

For the last two years at the Open House weekend around 450 people have visited the Mausoleum which was built in 1854 to an Egyptian-style

design by the Victorian architect H.E. Kendall. The Mausoleum has a grade II listing, yet the story behind its existence is for many people as fascinating as the structure itself.

The Mausoleum takes its name from its creator – the second Earl of Kilmorey. This was Francis Jack Needham, who succeeded his father to the Earldom in 1832. He was also known as “Black Jack”, although whether this was due to his complexion or his controversial morality it cannot be said for certain.

He built the Mausoleum as a shrine to his mistress, Priscilla Hoste, whom he had first encountered when he became a guardian to the children of Captain William Hoste after the Captain died.

Unfortunately, he took his guardianship to excess and in the early 1840s he eloped with Priscilla. Despite a search in Europe, the couple were not found.

However, in time they returned to the Twickenham area with which Black Jack had long had connections. On 19 July 1844 their son Charles was born and the relationship seemed set to prosper. But in 1851 Priscilla became ill and it was known that she had a terminal disease of the heart. Kilmorey began to make plans for his beloved's burial. This was not straightforward.

He wrote to the Directors of Brompton Cemetery Company regarding a plot for the Mausoleum and his application had to be approved by the Home Secretary. Approval was granted – and cost the Earl some £1,030 16s 9d on top of the £30,000 cost of the Mausoleum itself. It was designed to fit a circular plot at Brompton which measured 1,963 square feet.

The Egyptian design is believed to have been derived from a plate in a celebrated French book. The *Description de l'Egypte*, the first volume of which had been published in 1809. The shape of the building relates to the shrines at the heart of Egyptian temples – the place where a treasured image of a god was installed. It was ready for Priscilla when she died in October 1854.

you, Julian, for all your hard work on our behalf.

Thanks must also go to Trustee Teresa Sladen who, assisted by her husband David, has taken on the not inconsiderable task of editing the *Gazetteer* of Mausolea in England for publication. Their energy and experience (Teresa was for many years The Secretary of the Victorian Society) will ensure a publication of the very highest standards of scholarship and utility. We are assisted in this work by Dr Chris Willis, our new part-time Caseworker, funded, like the *Gazetteer* itself, through the generosity of the Pilgrim Trust. Dr Willis builds upon the valuable contributions of her predecessors, Will Palin and Dr Claire Graham. We are also greatly indebted to Robert Moulder for the meticulous research he has carried out for us concerning more than one hundred mausolea in Kensal Green Cemetery.

The MMT also welcomes three new Committee Members to its ranks, David Sladen, Edward Diestelkamp and Peter Howell, who between them combine an astonishing knowledge of architecture, particularly its nineteenth century aspects, and have a passion for funerary monuments and mausolea. Thank you for coming on board.

The restoration projects of the MMT continue apace. The third phase of the restoration of the Sacheverell-Bateman Mausoleum at Morley in Derbyshire; is now underway. Current works include the repair of the stonework of a ruined wall – said to be the sole surviving relic of an ancient manor house of the family – that the architect G F Bodley carefully preserved and retained within the precincts of the 1895 mausoleum. An elaborate iron grille at the entrance is also being consolidated and repaired. Ironwork is also the focus of the essential work being carried out on the Wynn-Ellis Mausoleum at Whitstable in Kent. With his usual generosity, Mr David Allibone has defrayed the cost of this as a memorial to his late wife, our foundress, Dr Jill Allibone.

Another exciting development is the MMT website, set up and running since January 2002. The site, accessible on www.mausolea-monuments.org.uk tells of the work and aims of the MMT, acting as an information exchange of the subject of mausolea and funerary monuments. It also gives us unprecedented access to new members and supporters, not only in Great Britain but abroad. So far we have had several hundred recorded 'hits' and a most favourable feedback. Many thanks to Ian Johnson, a Committee Member and our Treasurer, for all his hard work in

arranging for the new website to be set up, and to our supporter Pat Thomas for generously underwriting the costs of its establishment. The website will be continually upgraded and improved, and we see it as an essential tool in our campaign for the protection and recognition of mausolea. Do visit it and tell us what you think.

Since the last Newsletter, MMT Committee members have organised two group visits. The first, in July 2001, was to inspect the progress of the restoration of the famous Elgin Mausoleum in the churchyard at Maulden in Bedfordshire, which is being carried out by Bedfordshire County Council under the direction of David Baker. It was heartening to see the repairs to the roof and decaying stonework under way. The Council also has plans to reinstate the remarkable sepulchral ensemble to the Countess of Elgin, who rises in her shroud from a vast marble cistern. The Countess's effigy and the busts and armorial trophies that formerly accompanied her (now at Deene Park, Northamptonshire) will be returned in the form of cast-stone copies. Although hardly ideal, this seems an acceptable solution to a chronic *impasse*. We were also allowed to inspect the burial vault below, and reproduce for the delectation of our readers an extraordinary photograph of our distinguished patron, Sir Howard Colvin, emerging dusty but unbowed from the vault! Our thanks to David Baker and his team for making the visit possible and so enjoyable.



Sir Howard Colvin emerges, unscathed, from the crypt of the Elgin Mausoleum at Maulden, Bedfordshire.

The visit to Maulden was only part of an extended perambulation looking at mausolea in Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and the northern suburbs of London. We started with the Chandos Mausoleum at Little Stanmore, attached to the Parish Church, which has an illusionistic painted interior and stupendous, cliff-like monument by Grinling Gibbons to the 1st Duke of Chandos - Alexander Pope's 'Timon' in his *Epistle* 'On the Use of Riches'. Nearby is Great Stanmore, where

Her coffin was inscribed with the words "the beloved of Francis Jack, Earl of Kilmorey" and inside the Mausoleum the Earl installed a marble relief carved in Rome by the sculptor Lawrence MacDonald showing Priscilla lying on her death bed with the Earl at her feet and her son Charles by her side. However, it was by no means an undisturbed place of rest.

In 1862 Kilmorey moved to Wimbledon Park and he moved the Mausoleum, too. It cost £700, but six years later he moved again – back to Twickenham and into Gordon House (now part of Brunel University's Twickenham site) and again the Mausoleum was moved. This was its last move and it still stands today on that site, quite close to Gordon House.

During his years here the Earl retained his eccentricities. It is said that he built a tunnel to the Mausoleum and, dressed in white and laid in his coffin, he would get his servants to push the coffin through the tunnel on a trolley in order to practise before the day finally came of his death – in 1880.

The Mausoleum was left to his illegitimate son Charles but he sold it in 1895 for just £10,000. Eventually the property passed to Hounslow Borough Council, on condition of public access, although it was some time before anyone entered this secret cemetery. In 1994, boundary changes saw the Mausoleum pass into the care of neighbouring Richmond Council.

Richmond Council has made some effort to care for both the Mausoleum itself and the grounds in which it stands. The garden in which it stands is officially designated as a wildlife area and maintenance work is undertaken with help from the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. It is always spruced up for the annual opening at Open House Weekend, in September.

However, the site is still under-used and under-appreciated and it has therefore attracted the interest of a local charity, the Environment Trust for Richmond-upon-Thames. This was founded in the 1980s and acts as a group to champion the interests of noteworthy local buildings, including if appropriate, their restoration and adaptation for use by the community.

However, the Environment Trust for Richmond-upon-Thames has no such ambitions for the Kilmorey Mausoleum. Although the building needs some modest repair work, instead the Trust

hopes to concentrate upon the grounds. Can these be made more attractive and could this work help the site to be open to the public on more than just the current one weekend in the year?

Initial exploration of the site by the Trust has been encouraged by Richmond Council and together they hope to produce a plan to enhance the area in ways that are both attractive yet also realistic. It is hoped that a group involving local residents will be a means of ensuring that the garden can be maintained with suitable regularity, without the residents coming to view the area as an extension to their private gardens.

Derrick Mercer
Project Leader for the Kilmorey Mausoleum,
Environment Trust for Richmond-upon-Thames

Chairman's Report

This is the fourth issue of the *Mausolea and Monuments Trust Newsletter*, an occasional publication which aims to keep our supporters informed about mausoleal matters and the work we do to protect and celebrate them. 2002 is also our sixth year – we were founded in 1997 – so this alone is cause for celebration. I am pleased to report that, although concerned with the preservation of the 'Houses of the Dead', the MMT is a far from moribund organisation.

First of all I would like to thank all our members for their continuing support, particularly the MMT's Trustees and Committee Members, all of who give up their valuable time to help us in various ways. It is, therefore, very sad to record the death of one of our founding Trustees, Dr Chris Brooks, who died in February 2002. Chris Brooks was an eminent authority on Victorian art and architecture, and his book *Mortal Remains* (Exeter, 1989), made him an especially appropriate champion for our cause. He will be greatly missed. A fuller, more adequate tribute to Chris Brooks will appear in a future issue of the *MMT Newsletter*.

Another loss, although thankfully not mortal, is the retirement from our Board of Trustees of Dr Julian Litten, who again has supported the MMT from its very inception. Julian steps down to concentrate on other projects, but we can console ourselves that he has assured us that he will remain an involved and interested supporter, putting his encyclopaedic knowledge of funerary monuments and burial customs at our disposal when we need it. Thank

the ruined shell of the Old Church harbours the precariously preserved Holland Mausoleum, an elaborate Gothic shrine constructed of marble and coloured sandstone held together with iron cramps – a chemical cocktail that dooms this interesting structure to almost certain destruction unless something is done fast. Racing up to Bedfordshire we took in the capacious De Grey Mausoleum at Flitton in Bedfordshire, strictly speaking an attached burial complex attached to the east end of the Parish Church. Here the plain, rendered exterior belies a remarkable ‘dormitory’ of sepulchral monuments to the de Grey family, dating from the seventeenth to the twentieth century.

On the way home we took in three more mausolea; the Lytton Mausoleum in the park at Knebworth, an elegant neoclassical building by J B Papworth, and the Cavendish-Bentinck Mausoleum at South Mimms, a perfect Greek temple tucked away in a damp corner of the churchyard, close to the thundering M25. We ended up with an unexpected bonus, a peep at the Byng Mausoleum in the garden at Wrotham Park near Potter’s Bar (the setting for the film *Gosford Park*), a rusticated-classical mausoleum of almost Ledoux-like refinement built in c.1880 for the 2nd Earl of Strafford. Teresa and David Sladen researched and organised this excellent expedition.

Our second outing was a visit, on ‘Open House Day’ in September, 2001, to the rarely seen Kilmorey Mausoleum in Twickenham, about which Derrick Mercer has kindly contributed a notes for this issue of the *MMT Newsletter*. Our thanks to Mr and Mrs Mercer, and Angela Kidner, Chairman of the Environment Trust for Richmond upon Thames, for making the visit possible.

But without doubt the most heartening recent news about a mausoleum must be the rescue of the great Darnley Mausoleum in Cobham Park in Kent. The condition of this huge structure has long been a cause of public scandal and concern. Built in 1784-6 by James Wyatt for the 3rd Earl of Darnley, but never actually used for an interment, the Mausoleum became a mere folly, an imposing pyramidal eyecatcher on its eminence in the park. As such it was maintained in fairly good condition until 1957, when Cobham Hall was sold and its park divided amongst different owners. Gradually neglect and vandalism began to take their toll, and the surrounding woodland became churned up by joyriders and littered with burnt out cars. On the night of the 5th November 1980, a huge bonfire lit

inside the chapel on the upper floor of the Mausoleum caused the vault of the burial chamber below to collapse, leaving the interior a squalid and blackened ruin, daubed with obscene graffiti. During this time there were attempts to save the Mausoleum. One scheme proposed turning it into the central pavilion of a substantial country house, another made it into a weekend retreat, its niches punched through to form windows. Neither came to fruition, and the ownership of the Mausoleum passed into the hands of receivers and it continued to deteriorate. It was only in 1997 that this seemingly intractable problem began to be resolved, largely through the agency of the Cobham and Ashenbank Management Scheme (CAMS), which was formed to carry out restoration work on Cobham Park in that year, funded by compensation paid by the Channel Tunnel Rail Link which clips the northern extremity of the Grade II* listed landscape. Security measures introduced by CAMS have already reduced vandalism, and discussions between The National Trust, English Heritage and Gravesham Borough Council have brokered a solution to the problem of the Darnley Mausoleum. In 2001, Gravesham Borough Council took over ownership of the building, which is to be restored under the aegis of CAMS, English Heritage and the National Trust, hopefully with funding from the National Lottery. When restored, ownership of the Mausoleum and its surrounding woodland will be transferred to the National Trust for permanent preservation. Since the beginning of the year, a high steel fence has been erected around the Mausoleum, and its interior has been cleared of rubble and refuse, to enable a thorough survey to be made of its condition. As yet, no decision has been made as to the extent to which Wyatt’s masterpiece will be restored, but any work will ensure that its romantic air of battered, Piranesian grandeur is carefully preserved.

Finally, just to show that mausolea are still in daily danger of mutilation or destruction, is the saga of the Waldegrave Mausoleum at Navestock in Essex, where the Chelmsford Diocesan Advisory Committee has endorsed a plan to level it to the ground and replace it with an inscribed stone slab. True, the Mausoleum looks very like an air-raid shelter or coal bunker, and has been beset by problems of vandalism and damp, but it seems a pity that this building, which commemorates members of an illustrious family formerly seated in the neighbourhood is to be destroyed and replaced by a boring ledger slab.

