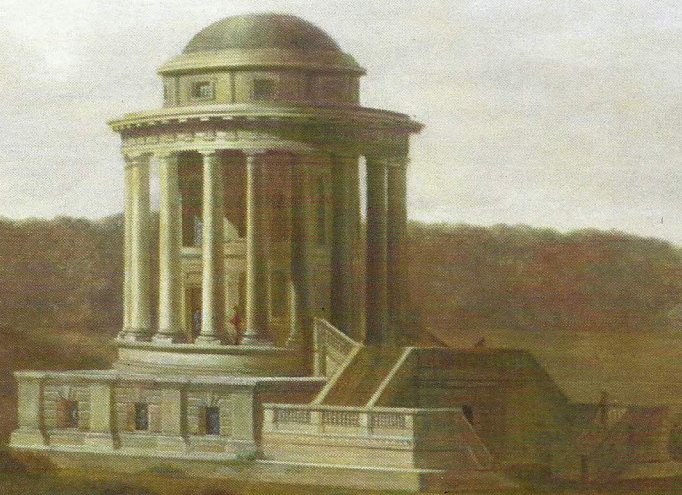


MAUSOLUS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MAUSOLEA & MONUMENTS TRUST

SPRING 2011



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Detail of a painting of the Castle Howard Mausoleum by Hendrik de Cort (1742-1816), from the Castle Howard Collection

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Members and others are warmly encouraged to contribute photos, news and features to:

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From the Secretary

I am delighted to report that our new Gazetteer Editor, John Hugh Beattie, is doing much good work on the online Gazetteer. Apart from updating individual mausoleum entries, he is currently engaged upon entering new data for mausolea on the Isle of Man, information about which has been collated by Jonathan Kewley, one of our members who lives on the island. Mr Beattie has also commenced inputting entries for mausolea in Scotland. We are always glad to receive information and pictures from members on the state of mausoleums they may have visited, or live near, and grateful to those of you who are collecting histories of those that may have slipped our attention. One such building was recently 'found' in Cornwall as the result of a lecture given by me to a group of Cornish historians. Many thanks to John and Jonathan for their diligent work in this field.

Thanks are due also to Michael Statham-Fletcher who is sorting through the archives and files held in the office at Cowcross Street and weeding out much duplicate paperwork. Michael is an ideal person for this; being a retired solicitor, reading boring files presents no problems at all!

We are currently updating our records and would be grateful if members could provide us with a current email address. Please email mausolea@btconnect.com.

Sublime Places: The Mausoleum in the Landscape

A lecture by Michael Symes, given on 11 April 2011

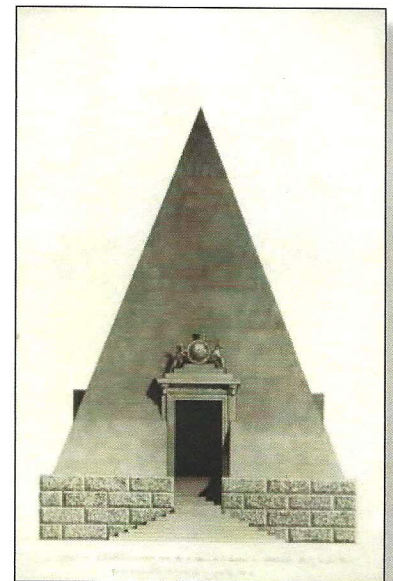
The setting of a mausoleum has always been significant and can contribute enormously to its impact. One has only to think of the Pyramids in their timeless setting of the sands. Burial in a garden or landscape links the human life cycle to nature's eternal cycle of growth, death and re-birth. Nature can also provide solace and healing.

There are many factors behind the popularity of the mausoleum in eighteenth-century landscape gardens. One, of course, is that it was the heyday of neo-classical architecture which produced some particularly splendid examples. Another is the long tradition, from classical times, of the garden as a place for contemplation or meditation; also of retirement from the world. Retreat was also the idea behind the hermitage in the garden: later in the eighteenth century they became mere fashion accessories, and sometimes the butt of mockery, but earlier there had been a serious sense of contemplation. There had also been a long tradition of melancholy, deliberately cultivated and dwelt on, which fitted in well with the presence of a mausoleum. The garden could be an all-round experience, embracing thoughts and feelings, though the mausoleum was just one of a range of garden buildings of many functions and styles.

The catalyst for building mausolea in gardens was the Churches Act of 1711, which permitted these private burials, though mausolea still had to be consecrated. One of the earliest, and still perhaps the finest, was at Castle Howard, designed by Hawksmoor and built 1731-42. It is based on the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli (model for so many garden temples) and Bramante's Tempietto in Rome, and owes something to the Tomb of Cecilia Metella on the Appian Way. The placing is superb – usually seen in the middle distance – and its prominence on a hill means it is visible from many parts of the estate, including some unusual angles (see front cover). Horace Walpole was so entranced he recorded in his diary: 'A mausoleum that would tempt one to be buried alive; in short, I have seen gigantic places before, but never a sublime one'.

Mausolea are, by their nature, ostentatious and to be seen, though some could be beautiful yet private, such as Robert Adam's at Bowood in Wiltshire (c1765). But most were placed for maximum visibility, some way from the house and on high ground. The mausoleum at West Wycombe in Buckinghamshire (1764-5), on top of the hill of the Hell-Fire Caves, alongside the church with the golden ball, could be seen from anywhere in the gardens and park. At Wentworth Woodhouse in South Yorkshire, John Carr's strange tall mausoleum was two miles from the mansion and formed part of a ring of four distant quirky monuments.

Many major architects essayed mausolea. Chambers drew sketches for one at Kew (unexecuted), and James Wyatt created two – at Cobham Hall in Kent (1783) and Brocklesby in Lincolnshire (c1790). The former has a pyramid on top – the shape was unusual for the purpose though it was common enough in gardens. The mausoleum at Brocklesby, on a knoll, a smaller more decorative version of the mausoleum at Castle Howard, showing how tastes had changed during the century. A final example, where the pyramid comes into its own, is Joseph Bonomi's at Blickling in Norfolk (1796-7), modelled on the Roman tomb of Cestius.



Bonomi's pyramidal mausoleum for the 2nd Earl of Buckinghamshire at Blickling, Norfolk

