

# MMT NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MAUSOLEA & MONUMENTS TRUST

Nº 21

March 2009

## THE DYSART MAUSOLEUM

The MMT Gazetteer records that "the Tollemaches of Buckminster Park are an ancient family claiming Saxon descent. It was Lord Huntingtower (1766-1833) who decreed in his will the construction of a family mausoleum at Buckminster, but nothing was built until after the death of Lionel William John Tollemache, the 8<sup>th</sup> Lord Dysart (1794-1872)." The delay may have been occasioned in part by the the adventures of the reprobate William Lionel Felix Tollemache, Lord Huntingtower (1820-1872), son of the eighth and father of the ninth Earl, who embroiled the family in a series of scandals culminating in a claim on the title, initiated by his common-law wife, that was only resolved in 1881.

The earldom is a peerage of Scotland, created in 1643 for William Murray (d.1655). The first marriage of his daughter, the colourful Elizabeth, 2<sup>nd</sup> Countess of Dysart (1626-1698), to Sir Lionel Tollemache (1624-1669), 3<sup>rd</sup> Baronet of Helmingham, united their respective estates and titles until the death of the ninth Earl in 1935. (Elizabeth lived principally at Ham House, and became the Duchess of Lauderdale by her scandalous second marriage, but that is another story.) Over the generations, the family have variously represented Fowey and East Looe, Orford and Suffolk, Northampton and Liskeard in the House of Commons.



The Dysart mausoleum is situated on the east side of the parish church of St. John the Baptist, Buckminster, Leicestershire, half a mile from the border with Lincolnshire. The land slopes gently from east to west (*photo, p.3*), and the church is approached by a long drive that skirts the walled garden of the adjacent

The Dysart mausoleum from the graveyard of St. John the Baptist, Buckminster

house to an entrance opposite the old stable block and farm buildings.

The Arts & Crafts architect Halsey Ricardo (1854-1928) is known to have spent some considerable effort at Buckminster on behalf of William John Manners Tollemache, 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Dysart (1859-1935). The commission came early in Ricardo's career and was a welcome change from the design of interiors and fireplaces that initially formed the main work of his practice.

Halsey Ricardo trained under the architect Norman Shaw, and would go on to spend ten years in partnership with the ceramic artist William De Morgan – and to design the spectacular Debenham House in London's Holland Park (now Grade I Listed) for the co-founder of the Debenham & Freebody department store in 1906. The Dysart mausoleum is his only known surviving work in the Gothic style; it is of a piece and a good example of the ecclesiastical architecture of the 1880s.

At Buckminster, Ricardo made alterations to the major state rooms of the Georgian house, carried out improvements to the estate buildings, and formed the building of the mausoleum for the Tollemache family. The total estimated cost of the work at

Buckminster was £13,000 – a tidy sum for 1882.

Lord Dysart was much involved with his life outside the estate and was unaware of the considerable cost of the instructions that he placed with Ricardo in his attempt to rationalize and improve the buildings on the Buckminster estate. The client and his architect parted company before all of the work was envisaged.

Unfortunately, the house was demolished in 1952 and a neo-Georgian building erected on its site in the mid-1960s. Ricardo's interiors were stripped and sold: an impressive Wedgwood mantelpiece from the dining room was acquired by the Birmingham Museum of Art in Alabama only last year, but the present location of much of the rest, if it still survives, is as yet unknown.

The Dysart mausoleum is of a simple plan, with its main chamber a rectangular space formed north/south with two lesser spaces east and west, one of which accommodates the entrance. The only light into the vault comes from a window in the gable of the bay opposite the door.



The mausoleum, with the church beyond

The walls are of deep pinkish red sandstone patterned with yellow, and the roofs are formed with massive slate tiles that over-sail the walls at the eaves, where they are thrust out with stone corbelling. The ridges of the roofs to the porch and the east gable are considerably lower than that to the main chamber and their eaves are higher, thus adding emphasis to the hierarchy of the parts of the building.

At each corner of the plan are two large buttresses. Those to the east and west walls are oversize; their roof ridges cut into the eaves' cornice on the east and run completely past the eaves' line on the west. The buttresses to the south and north gable are off-set from the wall in four stages; those to the east gable are similar, but the west gable wall has a pair at each corner that are of a similar pattern to those at the ends of the building.

The south gable has a triple window opening at its apex, while the east gable

has a small arched window and the west gable has a blank rose window; however, there is no obvious access to the attic space. The stonework to the north and south walls seems to be banded but the effect has been somewhat lost in the weathering. That to the east and west walls is of square blocks of stonework.

The mausoleum is contained within square sectioned iron railings and a gate with neat cast iron standards at regular intervals that hold the top and intermediate rails. The top section railings are at twice the centres of those on the bottom section, the rails raised in a curve where necessary as the ground rises.

The entrance door is framed with a gothic stone arch capped with a finial in pink and yellow sandstone banding. The door is of English oak with elaborate iron hinges and a centre band to take the handle and lock plate. The doorway is brought forward from the gable wall in order to

allow the finial to be free-standing and so the wall is stepped back above the arch with a short section of slate sheeting.

The entrance comprises a large flight of eleven stone steps that give access to the catacomb. At the base of these steps, the size of the mausoleum is truly revealed as half the building's volume is actually below ground level.



St. John the Baptist Church, looking east from Sproxton Road (photo: Mat Fascione)



The entrance and wide steps into the vault

Within the building, the High Victorian Gothic game is played to the full. Three large vaults on the central axis are held up by eight stone pillars, their bases at approximately ground level. Standing on the top of the vaults at either end are the stone tracery of blank windows that run from skirting level to the apex of the vault groins for the full width of the bay. There are 27 loculi the east side, and two blocks of nine loculi on the west, on either side of the steps. The loculi are formed of a slate shelf with stone uprights.

A plaque beneath the glazing in the centre of the window tracery on the east wall explains that the vault was constructed pursuant to the will of William,

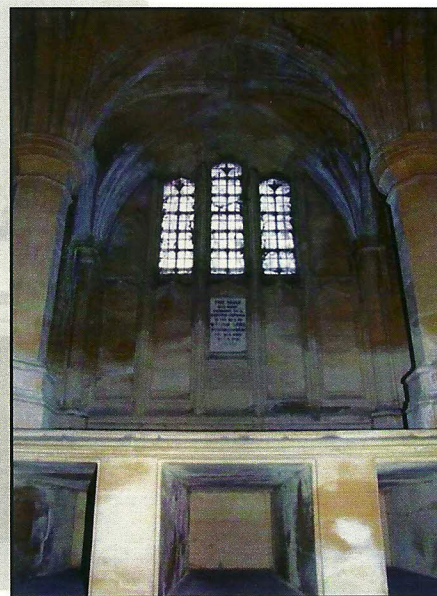
Empty loculi and the plaque commemorating Lord Huntingtower's original instructions

Lord Huntingtower. Yet only five of the loculi are filled, along the bottom row on the north-east side – shortly after the mausoleum was completed, the family chose to be buried in the church.

The first compartment contains the patient remains of Lord Huntingtower, finally laid to rest in his family mausoleum half a century after his will called for it to be built. His only companions are three Tollemaches and his son, the eighth Lord Dysart, after whose death the project was at last initiated.

The mausoleum is in good condition generally. The stonework underground is stained pink, saturated with damp but there is no obvious sign of spawling of the stonework or detailed carving.

DAVID ASHTON HILL



## ST. GEORGE'S GARDENS

On Saturday, June 27, MMT Chairman Roger Bowdler will lead a walk through St. George's & St. Pancras' Gardens, London WC1 (p.7). St. George's mark one of the first London burial grounds created away from a church; fragments of gravestones still separate the grounds of St. George the Martyr, Queen Square, and St. George's Bloomsbury. The site was designed by the architect of the latter, Nicholas Hawksmoor, who may have contributed to the fine monument marking the first burial, of Robert Nelson in 1715. Amongst the many unmarked graves, a chest tomb stands over Oliver Cromwell's grand-daughter Anna Gibson (d.1726), and flowers are still left for a group of Jacobites hanged, drawn and quartered in Kennington in 1745. The site also occasioned the country's first indictment for bodysnatching, in 1777, for which two men were sentenced to six months' imprisonment and a whipping.

Desperately overcrowded, it was finally closed to burials in 1855, and reopened as a public park in 1884. It survived Blitz damage but was in a sorry state when the Friends of St. George's Gardens formed in 1994 to work with Camden Council to preserve the space as a public amenity. The present gardens opened in 2001, thanks to lottery funding secured in 1997 under the Urban Parks Programme.

The Gardens include a mortuary chapel of 1806, now used as the Friends' meeting place, an obelisk of 1729, and a figure of the muse Euterpe that originally decorated the Apollo Inn (1898) on Tottenham Court Road (demolished 1961). Its plantings include "one of the finest groups of ferns to be found in central London".

## BEQUESTS

Over the past years, the Mausolea & Monuments trust has received substantial donations in lieu of flowers in memory of late members who valued and supported the Trust, as well as a generous bequest from a will.

We hope that those who can will remember us amongst other charities in their wills, and be remembered in turn for helping to preserve some of the country's most remarkable and splendid buildings.

A bequest to the Mausolea & Monuments Trust represents an extremely valuable gift to us, free of Inheritance Tax. The gift need not be large, but will always be carefully used and much appreciated.

The form that such a gift might take is set out below; please ask your solicitor to insert such a bequest in your testamentary provisions. You may specify a certain sum of money, or designate a proportion of your estate as a bequest.

### SAMPLE FORM OF BEQUEST

*I bequeath a legacy of the sum of £ .....  
(for a pecuniary bequest), or ...% of the  
residue of my estate (for a residuary  
bequest) to the Mausolea & Monuments  
Trust (Registered Charity N<sup>o</sup> 1106634)  
whose office is at 70 Cowcross Street,  
London EC1M 6EJ, for its general purposes.  
I declare that the receipt of the Secretary for  
the time being of the said Trust shall be a  
good and sufficient discharge to my  
Executor in respect of such legacy.*

## BOOKING FORM

Please make cheques payable to MMT, and include a stamped addressed envelope.

### BROOKWOOD CEMETERY, MAY 30:

- ..... members' places @ £3
- ..... non-members' places @ £5

### SOUTH HAMPSHIRE VISIT, JUNE 6:

- ..... places @ £18 each

### AGM LECTURE (GAVIN STAMP), JUNE 23:

- ..... members' places @ £10
- ..... non-members' places @ £12<sup>50</sup>

### ST. GEORGE'S GARDENS, JUNE 27:

- ..... members' places @ £3
- ..... non-members' places @ £5

### CLAPHAM VISIT, NOVEMBER 3:

- ..... members' places @ £15 each
- ..... non-members' places @ £18 for Clapham visit on November 3

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

City .....

Postcode .....

Telephone .....

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO:  
Events, MMT, 70 Cowcross St.  
London EC1M 6EJ, UK

## EVENTS

Saturday, 30 May 2009

### Brookwood Cemetery

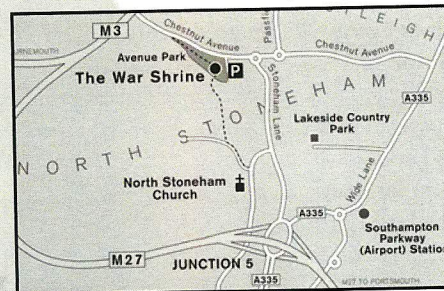
14:00 within the cemetery gates, by the exit from Brookwood Railway Station (45 minutes from Waterloo main line)

MMT Chairman Roger Bowdler leads a guided tour of the UK's largest cemetery, including a visit to the American Military chapel and First World War graves; £3 for members, £5 for non-members.

Saturday, 6 June 2008

### A VISIT TO SOUTH HAMPSHIRE

11:00, North Stoneham Church, Eastleigh



An evocative tour in the company of The Willis Fleming Historical Trust, taking in the WWI Stoneham War Shrine (1917) and other secrets of North Stoneham; Southampton Old Cemetery and the Nicholas Mausoleum (1902); and the Greyladyes Mausoleum (c.1910). Surprises are guaranteed. Tickets £18 including lunch; *please book by May 29.*

Tuesday, 23 June 2009

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

18.30 for 19.00, The Gallery, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ (Farringdon)

Our guest speaker will be the distinguished architectural historian Professor Gavin Stamp, discussing war memorials,

