

# MMT News

February 2000

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

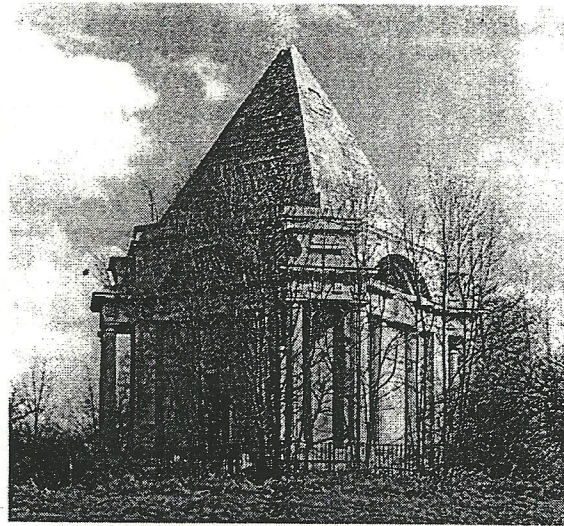
## Ravaged Giant

*Few buildings in England present such a lamentable sight as the Darnley Mausoleum at Cobham in Kent. However, there may now be a glimmer of hope for this magnificent Grade I building. Dr Roger Bowdler of English Heritage reveals more.*

One of England's greatest mausolea, James Wyatt's mausoleum for the 3rd Earl of Darnley, built in 1783-85, has long been one of the most worrying. Never used for burials, and subject to increasing vandalism ever since the war, the pyramid-crowned Grade I building was sold for residential conversion in the late 1980s following a Public Inquiry in 1985 which gave consent for two rival conversion schemes. The economic slump which followed drove first the developers and then their mortgage company into receivership. The mausoleum and 150 acres of neglected woodland are now in the hands of the Receiver: the building and its once majestic setting are in legal limbo.

What has been happening over the last decade? Gravesham Borough Council, the local authority, has, along with the National Trust (which exercises covenants over Cobham Hall and its nearby grounds), the Cobham Hall Heritage Trust (headed by the mausoleum's former owner, Lord Darnley), English Heritage, English Nature and Kent County Council, set up a management group named the Cobham-Ashenbank Management Scheme. Using £750,000 gained from Union Railways as compensation for the swathe cut through the edge of the historic estate by the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, CAMS seeks to resolve this thorny and long-running conservation issue. Set up in 1997, it is a short-lived body of five years duration which is looking to find a secure long-term solution to the entire former area of Cobham Park. Much work is needed in the once magnificent estate of the Earls of Darnley, who sold up in the late 1950s but who retain an interest in land.

The mausoleum stands at the heart of the park, splendid even in decay. But it can't go on like this for ever. Vandals from the Medway Towns regarded the lonely building as their own and inflicted great damage to its Portland stone structure. Off-road drivers flocked to the Repton-designed setting, leaving stolen cars as burnt



*The Darnley Mausoleum in the mid 1970s, before the worst acts of vandalism were inflicted. (THE GEORGIAN GROUP)*

out carcasses amid the bracken. Trail bikes made life hard for picnickers and fanciers of the Picturesque: what should have been one of the most notable areas in North Kent was becoming one of the most forbidding, and it seemed as though the forces of negativity were about to win.

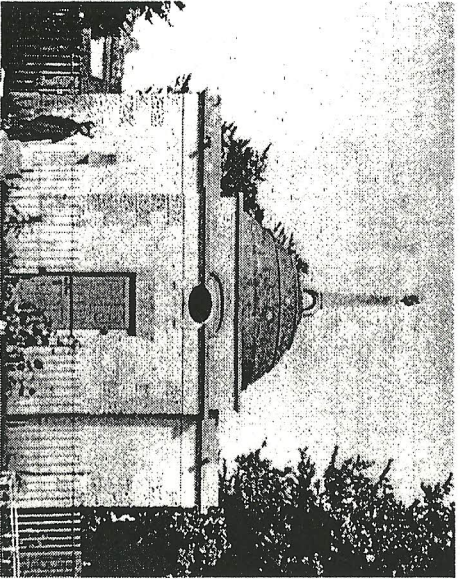
CAMS is making a difference, and enabling a more optimistic attitude to come into being. It has overseen the securing of the perimeter which prevents vehicles entering the area; vandals are discouraged, and peaceful walkers take their place. Damage has declined. Much research and investigation has been undertaken into the structure, and a programme of priority works drawn up. Active and committed discussions about grant aid, emergency repairs, short-term guardianship and long-term management are underway. Nothing is yet decided (the complicated legal position of the building and parkland does little to help) and no definite course of action has yet been resolved upon. But thanks to CAMS' efforts, and that of its sponsors, a solution is beginning to emerge which all lovers of mausolea will approve of. The Lottery exists for just such purposes of furthering public enjoyment of the natural and historic environment, after all. Lovers of decay - and all other friends of the MMT - are advised to hurry and see this awesome structure while it is still in its present blasted, calcined, ravished and blighted state. Such sights are increasingly rare.

## Message from the Chairman

*Tim Knox, Historian for the National Trust, has recently taken over the Chairmanship of the MMT. Here he welcomes the Friends of the Trust, and outlines the challenges for the future.*

Firstly, I would like to welcome you to the Friends of the Mausolea and Monuments Trust and thank you for joining. We are, as yet, a small and youthful charity, but we have much important work to do protecting historic mausolea and other funerary structures in Britain, as well as generating public interest in them and highlighting their present plight. Your continuing support is vital to our work.

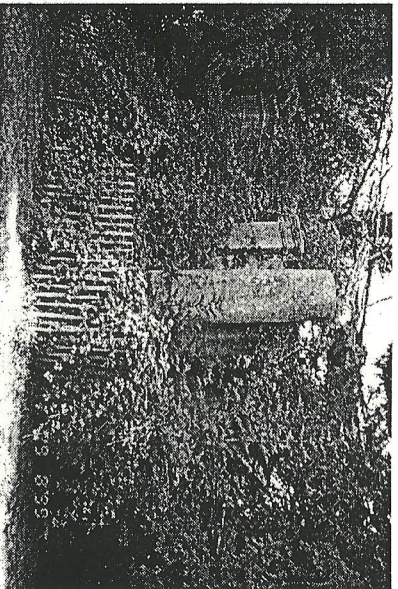
Founded by the late Dr Jill Allibone in 1997, the Mausolea and Monuments Trust is now almost four years old. Inspired by Jill, and promoted by the energy and enthusiasm of a small group of exceptionally eager founders, since its foundation the Trust has taken over responsibility for a group of five listed mausolea. These range from the neo-Classical Nash mausoleum at Farningham, Kent to G F Bodley's Sacheverell-Bateman Mausoleum. Another of our charges, the Wynn-Ellis Mausoleum, a lugubrious rock-faced pyramid at Whitstable, Kent, is soon to receive a new door, thanks to the help of an anonymous benefactor.



*The Nash Mausoleum at Farningham in Kent, one of the mausolea in the guardianship of the MMT. (THE BRITISH ARCHITECTURAL LIBRARY, RIBA, LONDON)*

Thanks to a generous grant from the Pilgrim Trust, we now have a part-time caseworker, Will Palin, the Editor of this *Newsletter*, who has been racing around the country compiling a national Gazetteer of Mausolea. He already has some 250 entries detailing the whereabouts, history and physical state of each mausoleum and its publication is expected later this year. As Dr Roger Bowdler relates in this issue of the *Newsletter*, we are also keeping a close eye on one of the longest standing conservation cases, the magnificent Dantley Mausoleum at Cobham Park, Kent.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have helped us get on our feet and do so much. Much of the credit must go to Teresa Sladen, from whom I have recently taken over the Chairmanship of the MMT. Teresa, who took the reins after Jill's death in 1998, has presided over the Trust during a crucial period in its development and it is largely thanks to her patience, tact and determination that so much has been achieved. Luckily, Teresa will remain as an active Trustee and member of the Trust so we will not lose her guiding touch altogether.



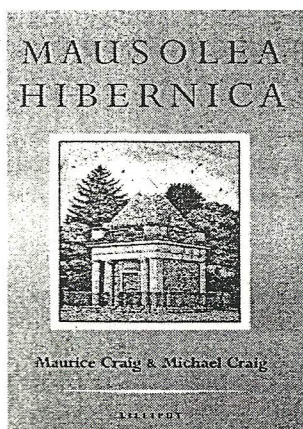
*The Guise Mausoleum (1733), at Elmton, Gloucestershire, is another of the Trust's charges. Although ruined, it is of huge architectural significance, exhibiting the earliest known use of the baseless Doric order in England.*

These are our successes, but we also have pressing concerns. In order to carry out the work of the Mausolea and Monuments Trust it is vital that we raise money. Our Pilgrim Trust grant, which pays for our caseworker and has funded the Gazetteer, runs out at the end of this year, and we are already facing substantial bills for the repairs to our mausolea at Morley and Whitstable. We simply have to start raising funds if the Trust is to maintain its impetus and continue its important work. This is where the Friends of the MMT can help - donations, good fund-raising ideas and practical assistance in this area are all urgently needed. We also need new members, and are going to be working hard to retain your interest and patronage - the only way to leave the Mausolea and Monuments Trust is in a coffin! If you think you can help us in any way please contact Will Palin, or me, at the above address.

Finally, to those of you who are interested in what goes on inside mausolea, may I recommend an excellent article recently published by Dr Julian Litten, a Trustee and founder member of the Mausolea and Monuments Trust. It is entitled 'Tombs fit for Kings: Some Burial Vaults of the English Aristocracy and Landed Gentry of the Period 1650 - 1850', and is published in *Church Monuments*, the Journal of the Church Monuments Society, vol. Xiv, 1999, pp 104-128 - grisly stuff and decidedly *not* for bedtime reading.

## Book Review

*Mausolea Hibernica* by Maurice Craig and Michael Craig. Lilliput Press, Dublin 1999. £16.95



A whole book on mausolea: Things are looking up. This is a rather special volume, beautifully produced, which describes and illustrates thirty-three Irish mausolea. The star is Craig's son Michael, a master of the tiny nib and speckled hatching: we are told he designs postage stamps, which sounds just right.

In style his drawings are a blend of Edward Gorey and the Brotherhood of Ruralists, with a whiff of Ian Hamilton Finlay thrown in for good measure. The result is just like a good mausoleum: beautifully crafted yet eerie, impressive but sad, engaging yet unattainable.

You can hear the owls hoot and the bats' wings rustle as you accompany the Craigs on their twilit perambulations. Pyramids are plentiful, but honours are equally divided between the Classical and the Gothic. One mausoleum -the Glenn mausoleum at Clonber, Co. Galway- is of cast iron; another -the Stephenson mausoleum of 1831 at Kilbride, Co. Antrim- is Hindu-inspired. The Greg mausoleum at Clonber is identical to one in South Park Street Cemetery, Calcutta (as is recognised here) while the Smith O'Brien mausoleum at Rathronan, Co. Limerick is near-identical to one in Kensal Green Cemetery, London to the same family (something which isn't mentioned here). There are so many connections waiting to be made: now the Craigs have shown us the matter, the pondering may begin.

Outsiders will regret the absence of a fuller account of the circumstances that lay behind the construction of so many mausolea, and the peculiarities of the Irish church scene. They will also notice the lack of dates too: but in a book devoted to elegy not exegesis, the omission is not grave. All too many entries include dispiriting accounts of recent vandalism: one mausoleum at Knockbreda, Co. Down 'has fallen victim to clerical enthusiasm for the accommodation of the motor-car'. After this book it will be harder for vandals to get away with it, and for indifference to triumph. If ever the sheer number of bright new bungalows all across Ireland causes you distress, and you think the Emerald Island spoilt, pick up this book. It encapsulates the reverse side of Ireland: aristocratic, distinctly odd, and ultimately utterly absorbing.

ROGER BOWDLER

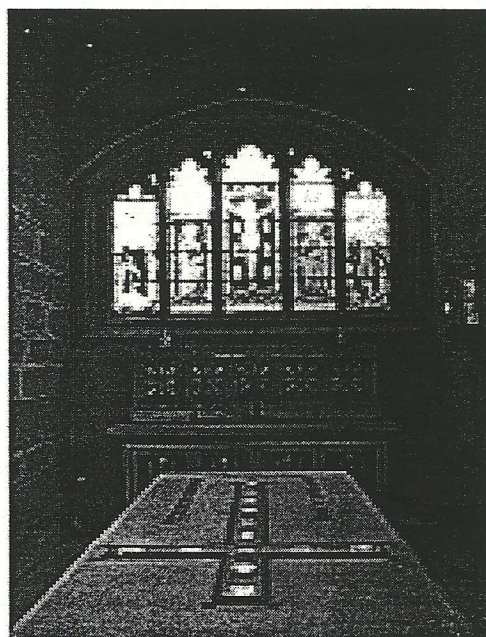
## MMT Re-roofs Mausoleum

*Teresa Sladen reports on work in progress at the Sacheverell-Bateman Mausoleum in Derbyshire.*

The repair of the Sacheverell-Bateman Mausoleum is under way. The contractors have finished the roof and are now fixing the gutters and Down-pipes. This is the first phase of a programme to restore the entire building. The work is being carried out with the help of a grant from English Heritage.

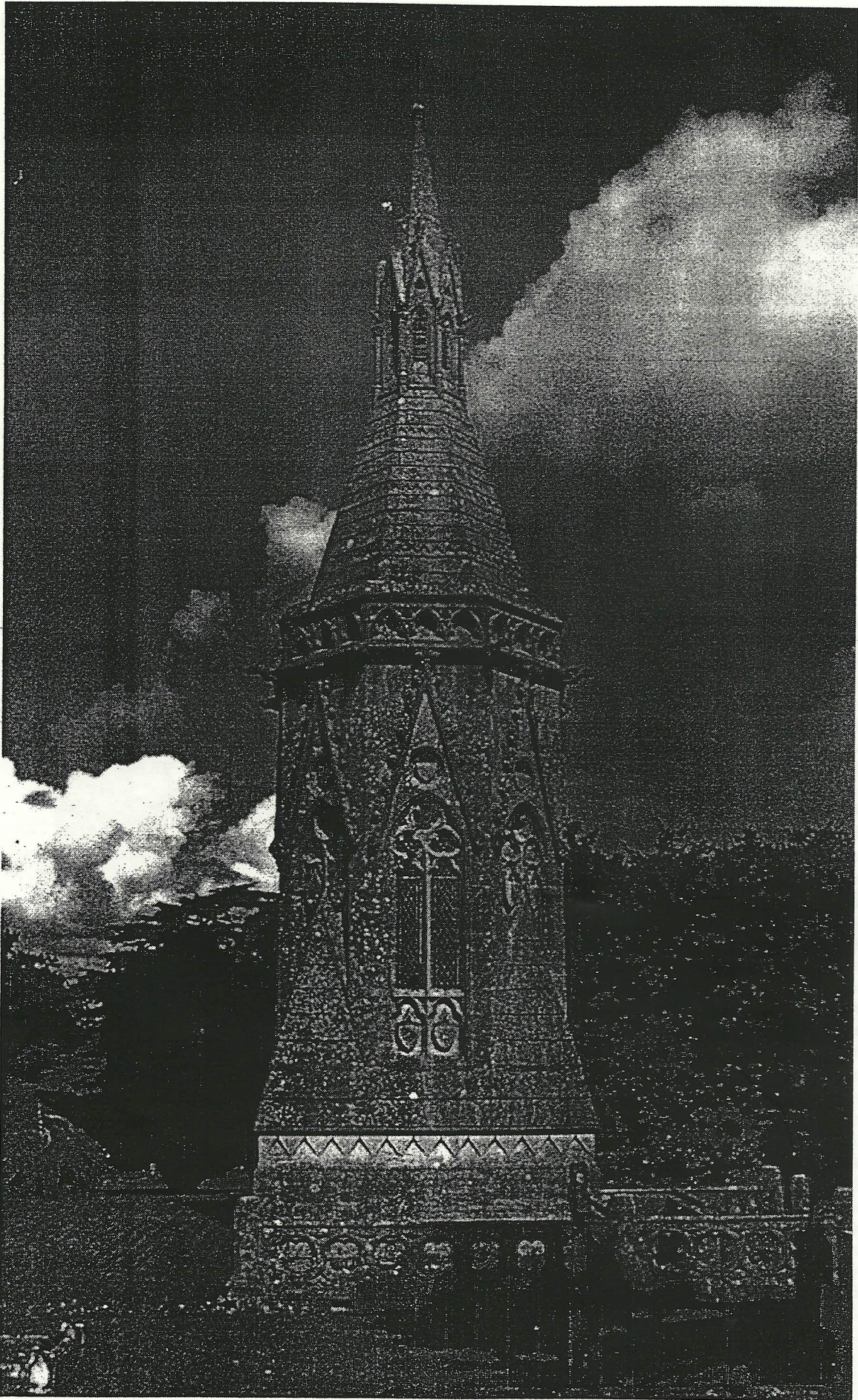
The Mausoleum was built to the design of G F Bodley in his favourite Perpendicular style. It has walls of ashlar red sandstone, a lead roof and stained glass by the well-known firm of Burlinton and Grylls. Local folklore has it that when it was finished, the grieving widow placed a piano there so she could play to her late husband.

The Sacheverell-Bateman Mausoleum was the first building acquired by the MMT in 1996. When our very active foundress, Dr Jill Allibone, died suddenly 2 years later, we decided to dedicate the restoration of this mausoleum to her memory. If you would like to help, please send us a donation, writing 'Bateman Mausoleum Appeal' on the envelope.



*The beautiful interior of the Bateman Mausoleum (MMT)*

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*The Phipps Mausoleum (c1870) at Westbury Cemetery, Wiltshire. Currently on the English Heritage Buildings at Risk Register (MMT)*