Midlands marvels and mysteries

By James Stevens Curl

A fitting if flawed tribute to one of England’s more undersung counties

Staffordshire in The Buildings of E
by Christopher Wakeling & Nikolaus Pevsner
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The late 16th- early 17th-century Wootton Lodge, probably by Robert Smythson (© *Martine Hamilton Knight*).

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This greatly enlarged, updated guide to the architecture of Staffordshire completes the comprehensive revision of the *Buildings of England* series. The version is a great improvement in terms of the splendid illustrations alone, replacing the somewhat murky half-tones of the original, though many of the new, coloured plates show the same buildings, but with far greater clarity. I have been awaiting this tome for some time: its completion was delayed because of the illness of Dr Christopher Wakeling (1948-2023), the distinguished architectural historian, who unfortunately did not live to see the work published, but was a long-term resident of Staffordshire, and founding director of the local

architecture centre, Urban Vision North Staffordshire.

The area covered by this book is perhaps one of England's more undersung counties. Unlike the earlier edition of *Staffordshire*, this revised volume deals with the area within its boundaries as redrawn in 1974, when the boroughs of Dudley, Walsall, West Bromwich, and Wolverhampton were detached from their historic roots and became part of the new West Midlands county (which, in turn, ceased to exist administratively in 1986). Those places are now covered by the *Birmingham and the Black Country* volume of the *Buildings of England* series. Tinkering with county boundaries causes particular headaches for any historian.

Wedgwood Memorial Institute, Queen Street, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent (erected 1863-9), showing the extensive use of terracotta and the statue of Josiah Wedgwood by Rowland Morris (© James O. Davies).

On the front of the wrapper of this very welcome book is the handsome Wootton Lodge, built some time after 1580 to designs probably by Robert Smythson (*c.*1535-1614), possibly assisted by his son, John (*c.*1570-1634), described in the text as "a compact, ashlar-faced building of calm perfection". On the back is the Wedgwood Memorial Institute, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent (built 1863-73), the polychrome façade of which, designed by Robert Edgar (1837/8-73) and John Lockwood Kipling (1837-1911—father of Joseph Rudyard Kipling [1865-1936], whose middle name is that of a spot north-east of Leek, noted for its scenic charms): this intricate, colourful front is hailed as a

“showcase of artistry in clay”, incorporating much terracotta and a statue of Josiah Wedgwood by Rowland James Morris (*c*.1842-98).

Staffordshire would be worth visiting for the city of Lichfield alone, for not only does it present an agreeable, largely Georgian urban fabric to the traveller, but it preserves quite a lot of mediæval traces. Among them are its town plan, the marvellous hospital of St John, with its memorable east range presenting eight massive chimneys to the street, and, of course, its lovely cathedral-church of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Chad. The last is not by any means one of the largest English cathedrals, but it is very unusual in that it has three spires. In these islands only three other cathedrals have such features, and they are all Victorian: one is Truro in Cornwall (1880-1910 – by John Loughborough Pearson [1817-97]); another is St Mary’s in Edinburgh (1874-1917 – by Sir George Gilbert “Great” Scott [1811-78], completed under his son, John Oldrid Scott [1841-1913], and grandson, Charles Marriott Oldrid Scott [1880-1952]); and the last is St Fin Barre’s in Cork (1863-79 – by William Burges [1827-81]).

The coverage of the cathedral within this book is excellent,

and does justice to this, one of the most lovable of English cathedrals, stuffed full of interest, and conscientiously restored from 1857 by “Great” Scott and John Oldrid Scott with admirable attention to authentic mediæval detail when it could be traced, but the building had suffered badly, not only through iconoclasm and the Civil War, but thanks to the cack-handed attentions of earlier architects ignorant of Gothic work. One can actually sense the antiquity of Lichfield within the cathedral, for the place became a Mercian episcopal see, first occupied by Lindisfarne-educated St Chad (d.672), a sliver of whose relics has recently been returned to Lichfield, thanks to the generosity of the Roman Catholic cathedral of St Chad in Birmingham, so a modest shrine has been erected to receive it. Part of what was probably St Chad’s Anglo-Saxon shrine was discovered in 2003 when excavations in the nave for a new floor revealed three fragments of a limestone sculpture in relief: they show the Archangel Gabriel with flowering staff, and on them traces of white, red, bright yellow, and black paint, with some gilding, survive. This was probably part of an Annunciation scene, dating from around 800, and although damaged, is a marvellously moving piece of work, drawing on Early Christian Mediterranean exemplars, and predated the later mediæval shrine (which must have been quite something), destroyed in the 16th century.

The Archangel Gabriel, from an Anglo-Saxon shrine, c.800, now in the cathedral chapter-house (© *Martine Hamilton Knight*).

One of the most exquisite objects in the cathedral is the breathtakingly beautiful crossing screen (1859-63), of iron, brass, and copper, made by Francis Skidmore (1817-96), with figure-work by John Birnie Philip (1824-75). It is sobering to reflect that Scott's screens in Salisbury and Hereford cathedrals were removed in 1959 and 1967 respectively: *The Friends of Salisbury Cathedral Thirty-First Annual Report* (May 1961, 27-8) smugly rejoiced at the removal of the "distracting fussiness of the choir screen", and the Hereford cathedral authorities, obviously looking with their ears, disposed of their "Victorian monstrosity", in fact a work of the highest quality, not born of mere imitation, but an object of confident, assured design in its robust employment of Gothic motifs, a spectacular example of the exuberant richness possible using metal. This screen was hugely admired when exhibited at the 1862 International Exhibition in South Kensington. It can now be seen and savoured in the Victoria & Albert Museum, which managed to rescue it from the fate suffered by its Salisbury relative. Any person possessing even a tiny scrap of æsthetic sensibility who pauses in wonder before the gorgeous Hereford screen cannot fail to be aghast at the crass philistinism that could ever contemplate casting out such a lovely thing.

"Great" Scott's beautiful crossing screen (1859-63) made by Francis Skidmore of Coventry, with figure-work by John Birnie Philip (© *James Stevens Curl*).

Staffordshire, of course, is indelibly associated with the Potteries, and the creations of people like Josiah Wedgwood, commemorated in the robustly riotous, coloured Victorian building in Queen Street, Burslem, illustrated on the wrapper of this book, but the legacy of bottle-ovens and other structures connected with the pottery industry has been sadly

depleted. However, good examples of bottle-ovens and other buildings may be enjoyed at the Gladstone Pottery Museum, Chadwick Street, Longton, Stoke-on-Trent.

Fine 19th-century bottle-ovens at the Gladstone Pottery Museum, Longton, Stoke-on-Trent (© *James O. Davies*).

Apart from the glorious cathedral, the county contains two other magnificent churches, both Victorian, and both masterpieces. The first is the splendid Roman Catholic St Giles, Bank Street, Cheadle (1841-6), built at the expense of John Talbot (1791-1852 – 16th Earl of Shrewsbury from 1827) to designs by Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-52), a sumptuous and scholarly re-creation of an English parish church of the time of King Edward I (*r.*1272-1307), with a glowing interior of overwhelming beauty and power. The second is the Anglican Holy Angels, Hoar Cross (1872-1900), built as a memorial/mausoleum to Hugo Francis Meynell Ingram (1822-71),

designed by George Frederick Bodley (1827-1907) and Thomas Garner (1839-1906): there, scholarship, refinement, and sumptuous detail combine in a revival of Gothic staggering in its beauty and exquisite workmanship. There is another church, enjoyable for very different reasons, and that is St Chad at Hopwas (1881), by John Douglas (1830-1911), which at first glance looks like a piece of domestic architecture, demonstrating its architect's interest in incorporating vernacular elements into his designs.

Pugin, of course, was also partly responsible for Shrewsbury's transformations at Alton Towers, now the location of a huge entertainments complex, far removed from the high dreams of Catholic Romanticism harboured by the 16th Earl: the Talbots departed in 1924, and after the 1939-45 war the buildings were stripped of metals and timber, leaving parts of the house roofless and in ruins. Although subsequent owners have initiated schemes of restoration, works which continue, the damage done has been colossal.

But there are fun buildings to be found, such as at "Speedwell Castle", Brewood (pronounced "Brood"), described in this book, with accuracy, as a "delectable folly": it is mid-18th-century Georgian Gothick, three storeys high, of brick, with two canted bays perforated with round-arched and ogee-headed windows, and a fanciful canopy over the central door, the last not entirely innocent of influences from Batty (1696-1751) and Thomas (1702-51) Langley's *Ancient Architecture Restored and Improved* (1742), re-issued as *Gothic Architecture, improved by Rules and Proportions in many Grand Designs* …etc. (1747).

There are fine houses too, including Wootton Lodge, Wootton, north-east of Alton Towers, mentioned above. Extremely important, from the point of view of gardens and garden buildings, is Shugborough, to the east of Stafford, largely the creation of Thomas Anson (*c.*1697-1773), who left an ornamental landscape of international importance in which some of the early buildings of the Greek Revival were erected. One

of the garden structures is described in this book as having “inscribed initials” which “have remained mysterious”. Well, that is a debatable point, for reasonable hypotheses about this inscription have been made some time ago, and published too.

The presence of the mausoleum, tomb, cenotaph, or memorial in the landscape garden has been the subject of numerous studies, far too many to be listed here. Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665), in the second version of his painting on the *et in Arcadia ego* theme (*c*.1635-6), depicted shepherds in an Arcadian landscape studying the inscription on a simple, rather severe Classical tomb: the shadow of one of the shepherds cast on the monument alludes to the Spirit, or Classical *Manes*, and the inscription was interpreted to mean either “and I was once an inhabitant of Arcady” or that, even there, in Arcadia, “I” (meaning Death) was ever-present. A gentle melancholy pervaded the lovely composition, and all allusions to the familiar horrors of decay (bones, decomposition, and dank, unwholesome graveyards) were absent. Here was the peaceful, beautiful ideal, a place fit for reflection and memories, where death was civilised.

The image recurs, perhaps most evocatively, in the so-called “Shepherd’s Grave” *or* “Tomb” in the gardens at Shugborough, where several celebrated *fabriques* were erected, designed by James “Athenian” Stuart (1713-88): these include the “Doric Temple” (1760); the “Lanthorn of Demosthenes” (who is unaccountably called “Diogenes” in the book, which is incorrect) (1764-9), derived from the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates, Athens, but omitting the tall, square podium of channel-rusticated masonry and blue Hymettos limestone on which the original stands, so that the impact of the “Lanthorn” in the landscape at Shugborough is not what it could have been, and the ensemble looks truncated, stunted, and incomplete; the “Tower of the Winds” (1764-5), based on the “Horologium of Andronicus Cyrrhestes”; and the Triumphal

Arch (1764-7), based on the “Arch of Hadrian”, Athens.

The strangely moving “Shepherd’s Grave” *or* “Tomb”, known, significantly, in the 18th century, as the “Shepherdess’s Grave” or “Tomb” (supposedly *c.*1758-60, but probably commenced *c.*1755), features two rough-hewn Greek-Doric columns, with the flutes only partly carved, the unfluted parts of the column-shafts embellished with curiously un-Classical carvings to enhance the crude, primitive, archaic allusions, and the lowest section of the column on the left has rudimentary carvings suggestive, perhaps, of Neolithic decorations seen by Thomas Wright (1711-86) during his sojourns in Ireland when preparing his *Louthiana* (1748). These Doric columns, virtually identical to the exemplar we know was drawn in pen-and-ink, with a wash, by Stuart, now in the British Library, support a Greek Doric entablature with six triglyphs on its frieze, and above the crowning cornice is a row of inaccurately-observed *antefixum*-like elements, more like shells, owing their origins to the unusual Greek-Corinthian Choragic Monument of Lysicrates, but singularly inappropriate in this case. Each metope of the frieze is carved with a relief: at each end of the frieze the metope is enriched with a laurel-wreath. The central metope also has a laurel-wreath, but with cypress-like fronds arranged in saltire fashion intertwined with it, and on either side each remaining metope has a human head in relief, one certainly male (possibly Pan or a Faun, therefore alluding to Arcadia), and the other probably female. This rather strangely assembled ædicule frames a grotto-like arch taken almost straight from a design by Thomas Wright within which is a carved relief by Peter Scheemakers (*c*.1691-1781), the subject being *et in Arcadia ego*, but in a mirror-image of Poussin’s painting, and with the “tomb” itself transformed into something grander, less simple, more Baroque, perhaps owing something to funerary monuments by James Gibbs (1682-1754).

The "Shepherdess's Grave" at Shugborough, with Scheemakers's version of Poussin's Arcadian Shepherds examining the tomb (© *James Stevens Curl*).

It has been suggested that the Grecian elements were the work of Stuart, and that the ædicule was added to the Wrightean arch, possibly to protect it. The designers of this haunting "grave" in an English garden were thus Scheemakers, Wright, and (probably) "Athenian" Stuart (whose delineations of the *antefixa* may have been misinterpreted by the person or persons who carved and constructed the "Tomb", but this is

insufficient to discount Stuart altogether, given that the columns themselves are too close to a drawing we know was by him). The pedestal under Scheemakers's relief is inscribed with letters

O · U · O · S · V · A · V · V

D·
M·

which the book under review claims "have remained mysterious". That is not altogether true. An attempt is here made to interpret this inscription, because all sorts of rumours have led to curious speculations, with absurd claims (among others) that the Holy Grail is there interred, thus inspiring the lunatic fringe into action (always a disagreeable phenomenon), but it should be emphasised this is only an hypothesis, based on reason, considerable research, some understanding of Antiquity, and a profound interest in the whole subject of commemoration. In my work concerning this I discussed the matter at length with the late Edward John Kenney (1924-2019), Kennedy Professor of Latin at the University of Cambridge (1974-82), and Fellow of Peterhouse from 1953: what follows is derived from our conversations and correspondence.

The **D M** would stand for **DI MANES**, or **DIS MANIBUS**, terms given to Roman dead as a sort of title, and meaning "To their *Manes*" or "Shades", *sc.* of the Departed. Capital letters with dots between them signify the first letters of words in a sentence, the first four perhaps standing for

OPTIMAE UXORIS OPTIMAE SORORIS (*or* OPTIMA UXOR OPTIMA SOROR)

(best of wives, best of sisters [or most excellent wife, most excellent sister]), but that leaves the **VAVV** to be interpreted. Could those letters stand for

VIRTUTIBUS AMANTISSIMUS VOVIT VIDUUS

meaning something like “a most loving widower dedicates this to her virtues”? However, could the fifth letter, a V, stand for *Vale* (Farewell)? And the last two letters VV perhaps suggest: VAE VICTIS, meaning something like “woe to the defeated”, some sort of reference to the stunning (and highly profitable) Anson naval victories over the French, or even a double meaning, Victory over Death itself? Yet as Death was present in Arcady (where the shepherds, incidentally, would have spoken Greek rather than Latin), where was the victory? Perhaps we shall never know for certain, but the formula *Optima Uxor Optima Soror* was often used in Antiquity, and I reckon it is almost certain that is what those four letters stand for, thus the inscription reads “Most Excellent Wife, Most Excellent Sister, Farewell!” Then comes an A, for *Atque* perchance? So the whole thing would read “Most Excellent Wife, Most Excellent Sister, Farewell! And Woe to the Defeated!”, but this attempted reconstruction is strictly *exempli gratia*, and interpretation is open to anyone who wants to try out his or her hand.

There have also been suggestions that the inscription may allude to that which is ephemeral, or to the transience of existence: in this reading, the **V · V** may stand for the *vanitas vanitatum* in *Ecclesiastes* 1:2 and 12:8, but proposed phrases or “translations” into Latin from *Ecclesiastes* do not really fit the inscription. This “Tomb”, however, clearly suggests loss, longing, and the unattainable ideal of ancient Arcady (emphasised by the primitivist nature of the curiously transmogrified Doric Order), and the wreaths, crossed cypress fronds, Scheemakers carving, and inscription have obvious elegiac, even funereal allusions. It has been argued that the “Tomb” may have been a metonym for the overall scheme, an incarnation of Arcady, and the original setting of the *fabrique* as hinted at in 18th-century accounts was undoubtedly solemn, with “spiry cypress”, “dim ilex”, and many other plants emphasising the

commemorative, longingly regretful, and bitter-sweet aspects of profound grief associated with the transient nature of existence.

Whatever the explanation, the "Tomb" may have acquired associations with Elizabeth, Lady Anson (1725-60), wife of Vice-Admiral George Anson, Baron Anson of Soberton (1697-1762): both Admiral Lord Anson and his wife are celebrated in sculptures, again by Scheemakers, on the "Triumphal Arch" at Shugborough. Thomas Anson, the Admiral's brother, owned Shugborough and was a founder-member of the Society of Dilettanti, which financed the expedition in the 1750s to Greece, enabling Stuart and Nicholas Revett (1720-1804) to carry out the surveys of Antique remains which led to the publication of the hugely important *Antiquities of Athens*, the first volume of which appeared in 1762, and others followed in 1789, 1795, 1816, and 1830: Anson was responsible for employing Stuart to remodel the house and design the garden-buildings. If the Admiral was actually the "Widower" in question (Thomas never married), it would be perfectly reasonable to refer to Elizabeth as the "Sister" of Thomas and as George's "Wife". The dates seem to fit the hypothesis as well, and Lady Anson was certainly a person of considerable accomplishments, with a reputation as a political correspondent and manager, as well as having great talents and charm. If the monument is, in fact, hers, then it is a worthy memorial.

There are further points to consider. Some have suggested that the inscription may be a Latin version of a Biblical quotation, or perhaps something to do with Stoic philosophy, but the presence of the **D M** indicates, almost certainly, that a *person* or *persons* must be commemorated, rather than an idea, a philosophy, or anything abstruse. It is also curious that the name "Shepherd's Tomb" may be incorrect, for some early descriptions refer to the artefact as the "Shepherdess's Grave" or "Tomb". A friend of Anson, William Bagot (1728–98)

of Blithfield Hall, not far away from Shugborough, mentioned (1772) how Nature pours:

Profuse her verdure & her flowers,

Her earliest, freshest bloom,

Embroidering all the hallow'd ground

With blue-bells, daisies, violets, round

Your shepherdesses tomb!

George Hardinge (1743-1816), in his memoir of Sneyd Davies (1709-69), confirmed Bagot as the author of this verse, but, some fifteen years before Bagot mentioned "shepherdesses", John Gilbert Cooper (1723-69) had mentioned the reference to Poussin's picture in the *Refléxions Critiques sur la Poésie et sur la Peinture* (1719) by the Abbé Jean-Baptiste Du Bos (1670-1742) in his *Letters Concerning Taste* (1757). Du Bos claimed that the tomb in the painting was of a shepherdess, whose body could be seen lying on it: William Shenstone (1714-63) referred to the description of "Poussin's Arcadia" in Du Bos's book in a letter of 1759, and mentioned that "Mr Anson" had "the two shepherds with the monument and inscription" (*et in Arcadia ego*) carved "in alto relievo at Shugborough". However, there are other versions of the image in existence in various forms, actually with a corpse on top of the monument, and it is possible the Du Bos description was based on one of those rather than on the better-known paintings, neither of which implies that a shepherdess is commemorated. And is it possible Bagot meant shepherdesses, in the plural?

Thomas Pennant (1726-98) mentioned this "beautiful monument" by "Schemecher", erected under the direction of "the late Mr Anson", showing two "lovers" appearing "attentive to an ancient shepherd, who reads them an inscription on a tomb: *Et in Arcadia ego*". However, Sir Thomas Hugh Clifford (1762-1823;

1st Baronet from 1815) and his brother, Arthur Clifford (1777-1830), in their volume on the Parish of Tixall (1817), quote Pennant, though not quite accurately, and state that he did not record the mysterious inscription, but that Anson was wont to "hang over" the monument in "affectionate … meditation". The Cliffords did, however, spell the sculptor "Schemeeker", and noted that Anson would never explain the meaning of the D M inscription, which remains "an enigma to posterity", which it may well do, in spite of these notes, a version of which was originally published in *The Georgian Group Journal* **xxiv** (2016) 53-64.

Let us assume the artefact is, in fact, a "Shepherdess's" rather than a "Shepherd's" or "Shepherds' Tomb". Some authorities date it to 1755-9, others suggest a time-frame of *c.*1748-55, but, given the date of publication of Wright's designs, it is reasonable to propose that the monument was erected *c.*1755, which would make it the earliest exemplar of the Greek Revival in England. However, Stuart only returned to England in that year, and the other *fabriques* by Stuart at Shugborough all date from the 1760s, so it is possible that the ædicule was added by him to Wright's earlier work in that decade rather than in the mid-1750s, and that the "mysterious" inscription is possibly slightly later, after Lady Anson's demise (the assemblage of elements in the *fabrique* is undoubtedly odd, even clumsy). However, the Revd. Thomas Seward (1708-90) seems to have penned the earliest known reference to the monument in "On an Emblematical Basso Relievo after a famous Picture of Nicolas Poussin" which we know was sent by Elizabeth Anson to her brother-in-law, Thomas, in 1756. This poem, also attributed to the "Swan of Lichfield", Anna Seward (1742-1809), the clergyman's daughter (who would have been only 14 at the time), is not particularly interesting or accomplished, but the dated letter and the reference would seem to indicate that the monument was in existence, with or without the Doric frame, in 1756. A much longer poem, however, which does not appear to be associated

definitely with any author, and is dated 1767, contains the following lines:

Observe yon rising hillock’s form,

Whose verdant top the spiry cypress crowns,

And the dim ilex spreads her dusky arms

To shade th’ARCADIAN *Shepherdesses* tomb:

Of PARIAN stone the pile: of modern hands

The work, but emulous of ancient praise.

Let not the Muse inquisitive presume

With rash interpretation to disclose

The mystic ciphers that conceal her name.

Whate’er her country, or however call’d

Peace to her gentle shade. The Muse shall oft

Frequent her honour’d shrine, with solemn song

Lyric, or elegiac: oft when eve

Gives respite from the long days weary task,

And dewy HESPER brightens in the west,

Here shall the constant hind, & plighted maid

Meet, & exchange their tokens, & their vows

Of faith, & love. Here weeping Spring shall shed

Her first pale snowdrops, bluebells, violets,

And Summer’s earliest roses blossom here.

So the monument, by 1767, was *definitely associated* with *female* shepherds, and the cryptic inscription had been cut. Of course those mysterious letters could have been part of the original structure, or could have been cut at any time from 1755 to 1767, but, assuming they were added after Lady Anson’s death, they could easily have commemorated her as a sister and a wife.

Christopher Hussey (1899-1970) muddied the waters somewhat when he confused the three lines given in italics above with the shorter Seward poem of (presumably) 1756. Nevertheless, several contemporary writers associated the monument with the commemoration of a woman (or a girl), and one refers to the “ciphers that conceal her name”, so it was definitely a person, and a female person, who was commemorated. Philip Yorke (1720-90 – 2nd Earl of Hardwicke from 1764), Elizabeth Anson’s brother, saw the monument in 1763 and enthused about the “most elegant Piece of modern sculpture” which did “great honour to Scheemaker’s chisel”. However, James Lees-Milne (1908-97) pointed out that he considered the old shepherd pointing to the inscription to represent Thomas Anson, and it does seem as though, during the second half of the 18th century, the monument was associated with commemoration of a woman; that the woman *was* mourned by Thomas Anson; and that the woman may have been Anson’s sister-in-law, thus the hypothetical interpretation of the cypher would fit. There could have been some other female held in high regard by Anson, but her identity is unlikely to emerge into the light of day now. The wreaths on the frieze may be elegiac and commemorative, and the central wreath, with fronds arranged across it in saltire pattern, might concern a remembrance of very close friendship, even love. And if the two heads represent a Faun and perhaps a Nymph, then they and their habitat in Arcady are commemorated by the wreaths. On balance, it would seem that it is likely the best candidate for

commemoration was Elizabeth, Lady Anson.

An undated letter from Lady Anson to Thomas begins "*Gentil Berger*", and refers to time spent at Shugborough, "*les delectables rives … les moments heureux … jours filés d'Or et de Soye … vallons fleuris … collines ombrageuses … eaux claires et ondoyantes* …" and "*surtout des Bergers et Bergères si aimables qu'on y trouve*", which suggests they played at being shepherds and shepherdesses beside the delightful waters of the River Sow at Shugborough. Was there also a sly reference to making silk out of part of a sow there? Who can tell? Lady Anson was a lot younger than her husband, and perhaps she won the heart of her brother-in-law. It does seem that Thomas Anson grieved deeply for her, and the "Shepherdess's Monument" or "Tomb" is perhaps a more apposite name for this charming *fabrique* (over which he would "hang" in reverie and perhaps longing) than any mention of male shepherds. Finally, there exists at Shugborough a portrait of Lady Anson in her younger years, dressed as a shepherdess, holding a garland of flowers, with an ovine duo beside her right knee, painted by John Vanderbank, Jr. (1694-1739), which might appear to strengthen the association of the "Tomb" with her. A disconsolate Pan, gazing over the waters of the Sow, the funerary nature of the "Tomb" and its setting, and much else might suggest a Love no longer within reach, lost forever: why else would Anson "hang over" the monument in "affectionate meditation"?

Doubtless speculation will continue, but at least this review sifts through the evidence, and comes up with what is hoped will appear as a reasonable analysis, if not solution. It is hoped that in future, the epithet "Shepherdess's Tomb" will be adopted, for it seems to have been thus called shortly after it was created. The descriptions of the Shugborough monuments in this book leave much to be desired, for they, and the garden in which they reside, are of great cultural and architectural importance, and not just confined to

Staffordshire, or even to England.

There is another wonderful garden, at Biddulph Grange, with cultural imagery appropriate to suggest different parts of the world. It includes a Chinese section, an Egyptian (very creepy, with stone sphinxes, a truncated pyramid of yew, and a stone portal with gorge-cornice decorated with winged solar disc leading to a dark tunnel at the end of which is a statue of the physically unattractive but benign deity, Bes), and other areas. The gardens were designed by James Bateman (1811-97) and his wife, Maria Sibylla Egerton-Warburton (1812-95), with considerable assistance from the painter and designer, Edward William Cooke (1811-80). They are in truth captivating.

Mention of Blithfield Hall and the Bagots brings me to another fascinating house, and to Nancy, Lady Bagot (1919-2014), who entertained me with an erudite exposition on the history of the church at Blithfield and its monuments. That church, St Leonard's, lies immediately to the north-west of the house, and north of the north range of the Hall is a handsome orangery of 1769, designed by Athenian Stuart, and erected by Samuel (1737-1807) and Joseph (1739-85) Wyatt. I am also grateful to Charles and Cosy Bagot Jewitt for showing me their extraordinary home and their orangery on two occasions. A very close copy of this orangery was also erected at Ingestre Hall, *c.*1770s, according to some authorities, but in this book it is suggested it was built in 1839 when Henry Ward (1806-84) of Stafford prepared a drawing of it, so the jury is still out on that one.

The orangery at Blithfield Hall (1769), designed by Athenian Stuart, viewed from the north range of the house (© *James Stevens Curl*).

Finally, to return to death and commemoration, there are some marvellous funerary monuments in the county, including a tenderly observed family group commemorating David Pike Watts (1754-1816) by none other than Francis Leggatt Chantrey (1781-1841), of 1817-26, in the church of Holy Cross at Ilam. But the most stupendously powerful funerary building is the Græco-Egyptian mausoleum at Trentham (1806-8), horribly exposed now by the side of the A34, one of the most amazingly radical piece of tough French-inspired formidable Neo-Classical essays in England, by Charles Heathcote Tatham (1772-1842). It deserves to be better protected and known. And more recently there is the National Memorial Arboretum near Alrewas, with some interesting works of architecture therein, by various designers: the largest structure is the Armed Forces Memorial by Liam O'Connor (b.1961) of 2005-7, a splendid conception, deeply considered and very finely crafted.

All in all, Staffordshire has a great deal to offer the visitor, and despite some curious lacunæ and errors, this book will prove useful to the explorer. I do have a few suggestions, however. Some volumes in the *Buildings of* series include dates after names in the index, a useful aid for the reader: they are absent here, and that is a pity. Secondly, the illustrations for the Glossary are rather dated (some of them first appeared in one of my works in 1977), and could be greatly improved with many more additions. And lastly, the

series continues to be printed in China: why is this, when so many competent printers in these islands (and in the USA) could do the job, some of whom are crying out for work?

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