



THE GEORGIAN GROUP

Amy Lim, ‘The Gothic Cross at Stowe’,
The Georgian Group Journal, Vol. XXVI,
2018, pp. 211–226

THE GOTHIC CROSS AT STOWE

AMY LIM

The Gothic cross is a recently restored Coade stone garden monument at Stowe, originally erected in 1815, about which relatively little is known.

It does not fit into an iconographical or political interpretation of the gardens, but instead suggests an experiential approach, one that prioritised enjoyment over intellect. By placing it in a narrow, gloomy evergreen walk, the second Marquess of Buckingham created a pleasurable fearful thrill for his visitors. Drawing on the supernatural inferences of crosses, notions of the sublime, and the associations of popular Gothic literature, the cross is characteristic of the romantic and imaginative aspects of Gothic.

Stowe landscape gardens, after a period of twentieth-century neglect, are being restored to their former glory. The National Trust, as part of the programme ‘Restoring Stowe 2015–2019’, is reinstating many of the statues, temples and monuments that have been lost, sold or damaged since the 1848 sale.¹ One of these monuments is the so-called Gothic cross, a Coade stone monument erected in 1815 and demolished by a falling tree in the 1970s. Using the scattered fragments that lay hidden in the earth and undergrowth surrounding the foundations, and an 1827 engraving, the National Trust’s contractor Cliveden Conservation has reconstructed the cross and re-installed it in its original location on a shady tree-lined path at the edge of the Elysian Fields (Fig. 1).²



Fig. 1. The Gothic cross, Stowe Gardens (NT), 2017. (Photo: author)

Little is known about the cross: few records survive relating to it, and correspondingly little has been written about it. The second Marquess of Buckingham left no revealing correspondence, no visitor accounts survive, and the published guidebook to Stowe includes no explanatory information.³ Alison Kelly noted its inclusion in the Coade workbooks between October 1814 and March 1815 when the Marquess purchased the monument and commissioned a new plinth at a cost of £225.⁴ In an article in *The Stoic*, Michael Bevington noted the discrepancy between the date of purchase and the stamp ‘Coade & Sealy 1811’ on one of the surviving sections of the base, suggesting that the Marquess simply purchased an existing monument.⁵ He speculated that it might have been inspired by the Eleanor crosses, and that the Marquess might have erected the cross at Stowe in memory of his mother, who had died two years previously. Given the square, open design of the cross, however, it is unlikely that it was modelled on the Eleanor crosses, which are tall, solid, and octagonal, heavily ornamented and bearing statues in the middle tier. The lack of heraldry also makes it unlikely that it was a monument to the Marquess’s mother. The shields within the quatrefoils on the base tier are blank, and yet the Coade firm was highly skilled at moulding heraldic devices and had already supplied numerous examples to Stowe.⁶ If the cross were a memorial to his mother, the Marquess would surely have commissioned heraldic mouldings for the blank panels, and placed it in a more prominent position.

It is unsurprising that little attention has been paid to the Gothic Gross, since the vast majority of writing on Stowe is concentrated on the eighteenth-century gardens. The second Marquess, later first Duke (1776–1839), was by all accounts an abrasive character, unpopular with his contemporaries, and the years between his inheritance in 1813, and the great sale of 1848 under his son Richard, the second Duke, are generally passed over in brief, characterised as a period of declining fortunes under

a pair of galloping spendthrifts.⁷ Their additions to the gardens, and those of the first Marquess, do not fit easily into a coherent scheme. The Gothic cross has no obvious place in the usual political and iconographical readings of Stowe gardens,⁸ and, along with other late additions, has perhaps been passed over as a merely unimportant residue of the decline of the once-great gardens.

This article argues that the cross is evidence of a less-explored aspect of garden history: the non-cerebral, everyday pleasures of carriage drives, boating, picnics and walks which made up the majority of experiences of the gardens for owners and visitors alike.⁹ This emphasis on sensation and enjoyment offers a more likely explanation of Stowe’s Gothic cross than attempting to shoehorn it into a retrospectively-constructed political or classical narrative. By placing the cross within a narrow, gloomy walk, Buckingham determined the manner in which it was to be encountered and received. He intended visitors to respond to the cross as a Gothic monument, with all the inferences carried by that style, both architectural and literary. The intertwined developments of Gothic architecture, art and literature in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries suffused the Gothic with associations of terror, subversion and the supernatural, alongside its long-standing antiquarian and political meanings. This was also the heyday of the Romantic age, when James Wyatt was using Gothic to create awful visions of the medieval past, melding the sublime with the historical in his vast edifices at Fonthill and Ashridge.¹⁰ Stowe’s cross acted in a similar manner, albeit on a much smaller scale. It was neither political nor intellectual, but rather sensational and emotional, deriving its effect from the associative values of its form and setting.

The cross is an unusually large example of a Coade stone monument. Classical styles formed the substantial majority of Coade’s output, but Gothic was a sizeable and lucrative niche. Orders for 1813–1815 show that Stowe’s monument sat

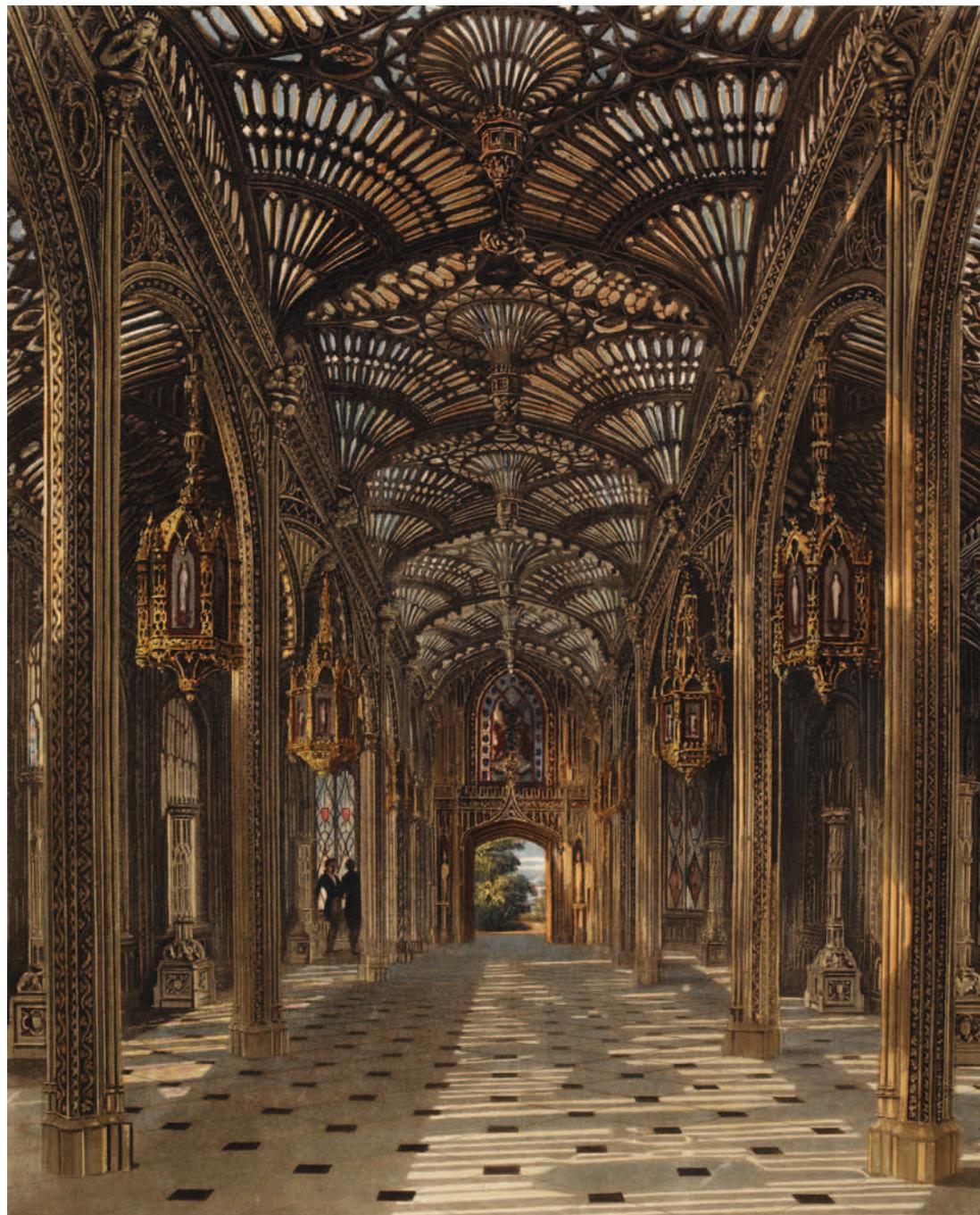


Fig. 2. The Conservatory, Carlton House, from W.H. Pyne, *The History of the Royal Residences* (London, 1819). (© The British Library Board)

alongside several other large Gothic orders: the Earl of Roseberry ordered £183, two shillings-worth of external architectural detailing, and the dowager Countess Harcourt spent a lavish £374 18s on a tomb for her late husband.¹¹ Although in the minority, these Gothic commissions were some of the highest value orders that Coade received at this time. Nor was this a new phenomenon; demand for Gothic items had been a small but consistent part of the Coade business for several decades.¹² As a business, Coade created bespoke pieces to its clients' specifications, but the reusable nature of the moulds used in the manufacturing process meant that they also produced a catalogue of off-the-shelf pieces, such as Gothic pinnacles.¹³ The published guide to Coade's gallery in 1799 (admittance one shilling) described 'A Gothic Monument with a reclining figure of *Grief*', another example of which could be found in the church at Steyning, Sussex.¹⁴ In fact, as far as Coade was concerned, the Gothic cross was not a cross at all, but a monument. 'Cross' was clearly the Marquess's description, used by the Coade firm in its correspondence with Stowe, but in its own day book and order book it is referred to consistently as a 'Gothic Monument with pinnacles'.¹⁵ The monument purchased by Buckingham may have been part of their regular inventory, cast from existing moulds and held in stock by Coade to capitalise on opportunistic buyers.

Consideration of the other Gothic pieces in Coade stone produced around 1810–1811, however, suggests that the production of the monument may have been directly related to, or influenced by, a set of Coade ornaments made for the Prince of Wales for his new conservatory at Carlton House. As part of the remodelling of the south front, Thomas Hopper designed a Gothic conservatory made of cast iron and filled with glass, which allowed light to flood in through the iron tracery (Fig. 2). Appropriately, Coade was called upon to provide the decorative fittings, with one new medium complementing another. The royal accounts at Windsor list an



Fig. 3. Thomas Hopper, Coade stone candelabrum.
(© Victoria and Albert Museum, London)

octagonal fountain with eight dragons, two statues of ancient kings, two of bishops and one of a pilgrim, and a set of ten candelabra ten feet high.¹⁶ When Carlton House was demolished in 1827 the candelabra were removed to the Coffee Room at Windsor Castle, and can now be found at the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Huntington Library and Museum in California, and National Museum of Wales, Cardiff. The V&A's example is marked 'COADE & SEALY LAMBETH. 1810' (Fig. 3). The candelabra originally sat on black marble plinths and held brass burners of six lamps each.¹⁷ Presumably the overlapping dragons that surmount the base match those described on the octagonal fountain.

The Coade pieces at Carlton House could not have been better showcased than at the Prince Regent's fête, held in June 1811. At a gala dinner for more than two thousand of the nobility, gentry and distinguished foreign guests, a long table stretched throughout the entire south front of Carlton House, with the prince seated in the highest place, at the west end of Hopper's conservatory.¹⁸ No expense was spared on the lavish decorations which, in the conservatory, appear to have been modelled on the legendary feasts of the medieval European courts. A buffet displaying the prince's magnificent collection of silver-gilt plate was complemented by an *entremet* (table decoration) consisting of a stream running the length of the table, complete with mossy banks, bridges, and gold and silver fish. It would not have been out of place at one of Charles the Bold's Feasts of the Pheasant. The fantasy was continued in the liveries of the footmen, one of whom appeared 'in a complete suit of antient armour'.¹⁹ The gala has echoes of William Beckford's exuberant Gothic reception held for Lord Nelson at Fonthill in December 1800. Here too, servants in medieval dress waited on guests at dinner in the Cardinal's Parlour, minstrels played from the gallery and even the food was 'unmixed with the refinements of modern cookery'.²⁰ Fantasy Gothic appeared to require actors to populate its stage.

Like Hopper's candelabra, the Gothic cross purchased by Buckingham is full of exquisite carving and detail. The lowest tier is relatively plain, and it may be that this section is the plinth commissioned by Buckingham, although the charge of £15 barely seems enough to cover the cost of the materials required.²¹ The middle and upper tiers, however, are packed with crisp detailing, with rippling foliated crockets on the pinnacles, and miniature ribbed vaults to the roofs, complete with leaf capitals and bosses of swirling foliage, like a cathedral on a dolls' house scale (Fig. 4). It is possible that the monument was made as an additional piece for the suite of Coade ornamentation in the conservatory and the surrounding garden, but as it is dated 1811 and not 1810 (as the other pieces are), and does not carry the dragon motif, this is not probable.

It is more likely that Coade and Sealy were taking advantage of the publicity generated by their royal client to promote their skills in Gothic ornamentation. Thomas Dubbin, foreman of the Lambeth works, was an experienced designer and could easily have reused or copied elements from previous designs to build the monument.²² It would have made sound commercial sense for Coade and Sealy to capitalise on this excellent piece of advertising, and the monument would have been prominently displayed in the workyard, just as the monumental River God features in an 1804 watercolour of the Coade premises.²³ Lord Temple, soon to be the second Marquess of Buckingham, would certainly have been at the Carlton House festivities, and been familiar with the Coade stone ornaments in the conservatory. The Prince Regent was a close personal friend and a regular visitor to Stowe. The Coade records do not indicate whether the Marquess visited their premises, or simply wrote to them requesting such a piece, but the Prince Regent's decision to commission Coade ornaments for his conservatory at Carlton House would have conferred an aura of approval onto the monument, and his appropriation of it for light-hearted play-



Fig. 4. Gothic cross, detail showing vaulted roof to second tier. (Photo: author)

acting sets it firmly within Romantic Gothic. It also set the tone for how the monument was to be used at Stowe.

Crosses, whether market hubs or *memento mori*, were a familiar part of the landscape in towns and villages across the country, but they were highly unusual as garden architecture. Yet the Marquess of Buckingham from the outset referred to the

Coade monument as a Gothic cross, subtly shifting its associations and the way in which it would be received.²⁴ Why might he have desired such an addition to his gardens? Uncharitable observers might have speculated that it was a simple case of imitation, since Henry Hoare had installed the medieval Bristol cross at Stourhead, one of Stowe's principal rivals to garden fame (Fig. 5). Of fourteenth-century origin, it was removed from its

original location in 1733, and eventually reassembled at Stourhead in 1765; three years later it was joined by the fifteenth-century St Peter's Pump. Hoare seems to have acquired these unwanted medieval relics in a spirit of antiquarianism, but he was also motivated by Picturesque considerations. Whilst the pump was used to mark the source of the river Stour that fed the ornamental lake, the Bristol cross was placed in a village green setting, adjacent to the church and a scattering of cottages. Similar aesthetic considerations appear to have motivated the Cotgreave family who, around 1813, installed the excavated remains of Chester market cross, destroyed by the puritans during the interregnum, into 'a sort of rockery' in the grounds of their new home at Netherlegh.²⁵ The historical interest of the crosses added to their picturesque qualities.

Antiquarian interest in crosses was growing, as the *Gentleman's Magazine* devoted whole articles to the subject, and John Britton assiduously described the many curious crosses he encountered on his peregrinations around the country.²⁶ But if Buckingham had been motivated by antiquarianism, he could easily have acquired the genuine article at little or no cost, just as Hoare had done half a century earlier. In many towns, crosses were seen to be in the way of civic improvements, and were removed or allowed to fall into disrepair. The town of Buckingham's own cross, broken down to only its steps and the base of the shaft, had been removed from its situation in the Horse Fair in the late eighteenth century, and by the Marquess' time served duty as the pedestal for a sundial in the garden of the Dun Cow public house.²⁷ Even large and ornate crosses were subject to neglect and demolition. The magnificent and richly gilded Coventry cross, which had been well cared for in the seventeenth century, was destroyed at the end of the eighteenth century, as it was considered 'behind the age, and rather in the way'.²⁸

Aside from their civic function and antiquarian interest, however, there was another aspect to crosses: they also had a strong spiritual and even



Fig. 5. Bristol cross, Stourhead (NT), 2017.
(Photo: author)



Fig. 6. Benjamin Wyatt, Devizes Market cross (1814).
(*Wikipedia Commons*)



Fig.7. The Holie Well, Ashridge, from Humphrey Repton's 'Red Book' for Ashridge, 1813.
(*The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program*)

supernatural dimension. This is to be expected, given their origin as Christian symbols, although crosses did not have to be cruciform or even carry any overt Christian imagery. In a post-Reformation society, however, suspicious of Catholic practices, the religious aspect of crosses became conflated with superstition and the supernatural. Just as crosses could be used to define physical boundaries, they could also mark the liminal space between life and death, as with the Eleanor crosses which marked the resting places of the queen's body on her final journey to burial. In Catholic theology, monuments did not simply commemorate the lives and achievements of the departed but were a focus

for intercessory prayers. Crosses could take on powers of their own, and Alfred Rimmer noted that in Delamere Forest in Cheshire there were several ancient crosses used as sanctuaries for travellers, 'where even robbers respected them, provided the former could reach the cross first.'²⁹ Stourhead's own cross had been described as 'a superstitious relic' in a petition to remove it in 1733.³⁰

It is therefore significant that the cross that is most contemporaneous to Stowe's, both in date and design, was linked to a notorious tale of the supernatural. Henry Addington, Lord Sidmouth, commissioned a new Bath stone cross by Benjamin Wyatt to replace the decayed market cross in his

home town of Devizes (Fig. 6). It served as both a functioning market cross and a monument to Sidmouth's local political achievements. It also recorded a supernatural event that occurred at the site of the old cross in 1753, from which an inscription was carefully preserved and transferred to the new cross as a 'Salutary Warning'. It recounts how Ruth Pierce, a duplicitous market trader, protested that she had paid her share of a sack of wheat and said "*She wished she might drop down dead if she had not*" [...] when to the consternation and terror of the surrounding multitude, she instantly fell down and expired.³¹ Wyatt's design may have been based on the medieval cross at Leighton Buzzard, with which he would have been familiar from his travels, but there were also similarities with the Coade monument: the base was solid and square rather than Leighton Buzzard's open pentagon, and both the Coade and Devizes crosses have a panel of quatrefoil trellis moulding between the base and middle tiers. Between 1804 and 1814, the Wyatt family had worked on the remodelling of the south front of Carlton House, including the Gothic dining room, and James Wyatt, Benjamin's father, used Coade stone frequently; it is quite probable that Benjamin had seen Stowe's cross in the Coade workyard and it had influenced his design for the cross at Devizes.³² Sidmouth was also familiar with the Gothic work at Carlton House, and he and Wyatt had agreed the plans for the Devizes cross together.³³ It is unlikely to be simple coincidence that the design of the two crosses is so similar.

The Wyatt family was also responsible for drawing up plans for a cross or well to a design by Humphrey Repton for the Monks' Garden at Ashridge, not far from Stowe. Various described as a conduit, holy well, or cross, it is remarkably similar to the Devizes cross. Following Repton's illustration in his 'Red Book' for Ashridge (Fig. 7), Jeffry Wyatt (later Wyattville) made sketches for a cross in 1815, the year after Benjamin had designed the cross at Devizes, although it was not executed until 1820 in

a somewhat altered format.³⁴ Meanwhile Benjamin designed furniture using the same quatrefoil within a square design that features in the lower plinth of the Stowe cross.³⁵ Gothic fantasy in the Carlton House manner was evident here, as the Wyatts and Repton created a mansion masquerading as an abbey. Although Ashridge had its origins in a monastic foundation, the monks had been driven out in 1539, and construction was financed by the profits from the seventh Earl of Bridgewater's eponymous canal.³⁶ The Monks' Garden was intended to evoke the long-dead inhabitants of the *soi-disant* College of Bonhommes; although not explicitly supernatural, it could recall, for visitors of a rational Protestant age, the muffled footsteps and superstitious mumblings of the departed brothers. Similarly, the memorial cross to Queen Catherine of Aragon built by Lord Ossory at Horace Walpole's instigation, in the gardens at Park House, Ampthill, Bedfordshire, in 1773, was an act of romantic, Catholic fantasy.³⁷ What all these crosses have in common is a strong imaginative dimension: a link to the supernatural, a romanticised image of the medieval past, or both.

For Henry Tilney, in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, 'The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid.'³⁸ Thus he admonished Catherine Morland, who had ventured to suppose that gentlemen only read 'better books'. He continued: 'I have read all Mrs Radcliffe's works, and most of them with great pleasure. The Mysteries of Udolpho, when I had once begun it, I could not lay down again; - I remember finishing it in two days - my hair standing on end the whole time.' The widespread popularity of Gothic fiction, satirised here, offers a clue to the role that the Gothic cross was intended to play in the gardens at Stowe. Following Horace Walpole's ground-breaking 1764 novel, *The Castle of Otranto*, which set a spine-tingling tale of suspense and superstition against the towering battlements and labyrinthine dungeons of the eponymous castle,

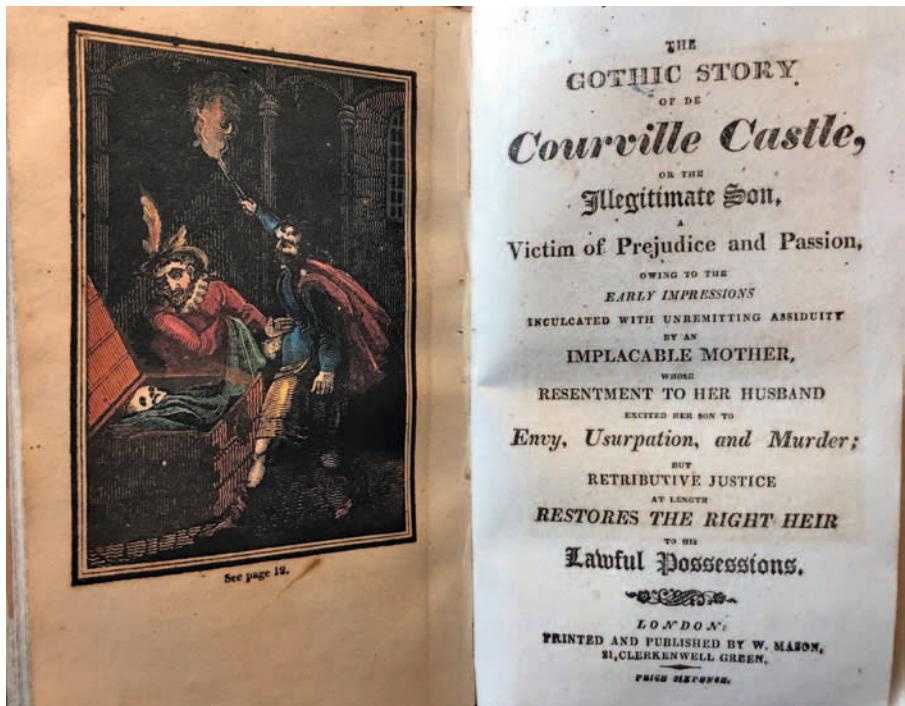


Fig. 8. Title page and frontispiece,
The Gothic Story of de Courville Castle (1813).

Gothic architecture and literature had become entwined in a symbiosis that was still profoundly influential in the early years of the nineteenth century. Ann Radcliffe was the leading author of the genre, with works such as *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797) achieving immense popularity.

Publishers were quick to capitalise on the success of writers such as Radcliffe, and brought out a host of short, cheap Gothic stories that appealed to those who did not have the money or time to read the longer, multi-volume novels. Known as 'shilling shockers' or 'bluebooks', after their flimsy blue paper covers, they did not in fact cost a shilling but a mere sixpence to buy, or only a penny to borrow from the circulating libraries.³⁹ In their heyday between 1800 and 1820, hundreds of these short books

and pamphlets were published, mostly written by anonymous authors. Their lengthy and tantalising titles promised readers all the tropes that had already come to define Gothic fiction: haunted castles, convents, bandits, abductions, ancient manuscripts and innocent, swooning heroines. Readers knew just what to expect from stories such as *The Vindictive Monk* or *The Spectre Mother* and a luridly-coloured frontispiece added to the promise of excitement (Fig. 10). Although primarily targeted at the less well-off, the 'bluebooks' found readers of all classes, and the young Percy Bysshe Shelley and his schoolmates kept a secret stash of the pocket-sized thrillers.⁴⁰

From the start, Gothic architecture played a prominent part in these works of fiction. Radcliffe relied heavily on architectural descriptions to signal mood. As well as the fortress-like Udolpho, the

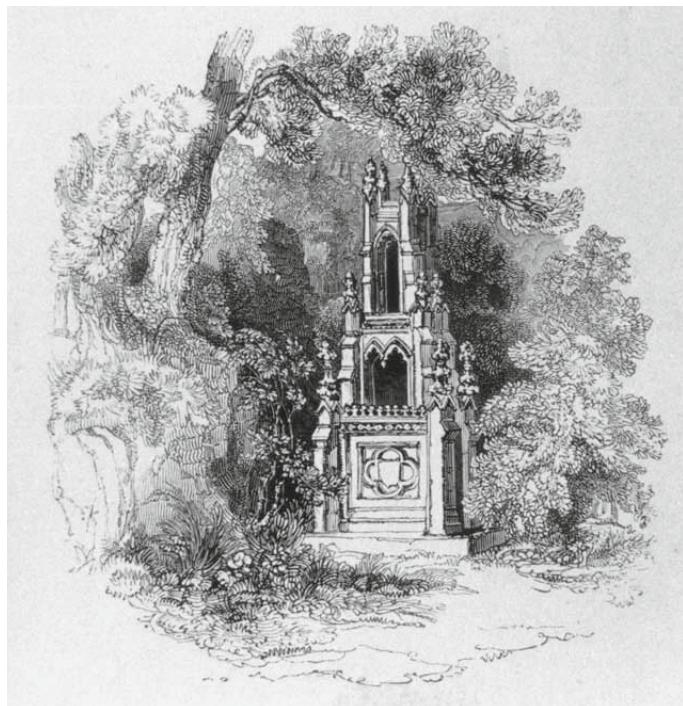


Fig. 9. Gothic cross, engraving, 1827.
© National Trust Images)

novels are littered with Gothic towers, battlements and convents, usually in a state of semi-ruination, in best Picturesque style. In the 'bluebooks', the economy of words required by the restricted format of typically only thirty-six pages, albeit densely printed, meant that plot was paramount, and authors could not afford to squander their readers' time or attention on superfluous description. Radcliffe's lengthy architectural and topographical descriptions, so crucial to establishing the mood in her novels, were eschewed in favour of getting straight to the action. However, it was precisely because Radcliffe and other authors of full-length novels had established the connection between Gothic architecture, sublime nature, and dark, supernatural deeds, that the authors of the 'bluebooks' could immediately summon up a mood or setting with

only a brief reference to a Gothic casement or a dark cloud. Nevertheless, in a condensed format, all the same ingredients were present. Gothic architecture had travelled a long way from its political and genealogical associations of the early- and mid-eighteenth century, and had become synonymous with the supernatural terrors of an irrational age. Sublime nature, darkness, and Gothic architecture, especially castles and religious houses, had become a shorthand for mystery, crime, and the supernatural. The descriptor alone, 'The Gothic Story', told the reader everything they could expect to find inside.

Besides Gothic fiction, Edmund Burke's notions of the sublime, elucidated in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, also clearly influenced Buckingham's decision to install the cross in such a shadowy setting. First published in 1757

it had run to sixteen editions by his death in 1797 and was still influential in the first decades of the nineteenth century.⁴¹ Burke, a Buckinghamshire man himself, had been a close friend of the Marquess's great-uncle Earl Temple. He noted how intimations of terror that were not directly injurious or life-threatening were in fact pleasurable, 'a sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquillity tinged with terror'.⁴² He also identified where the Sublime might best be encountered, notably in semi-darkness and obscurity, where 'the druids performed all their

ceremonies in the bosom of the darkest woods, and in the shade of the oldest and most spreading oaks'.⁴³ By designating the monument as a cross, and installing it in a gloomy evergreen walk at Stowe, Buckingham created an experience which drew on the thrills of the Sublime and the pleasurable terrors that were associated with Gothic architecture and, specifically, crosses.

On its arrival at Stowe, Buckingham used existing trees and newly planted shrubs to create an evergreen walk where the Gothic cross could



Fig. 10. Gothic cross showing yew trees and stumps, 2017.
(Photo: author)

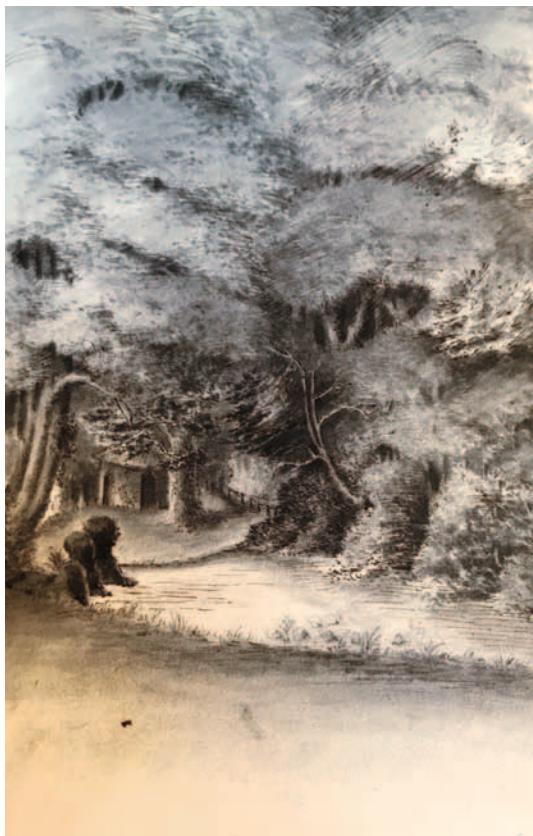


Fig. 11. ‘Cliefden, Bucks, April 12th 1819’,
sketchbook of Lady Georgina North.
(© Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford)



Fig. 12. Gothic sketch, sketchbook of
Lady Georgina North. (© Bodleian Libraries,
University of Oxford)

be encountered as part of a circuit of the gardens. The Seeley guidebook, in which the cross appears from the 1817 edition onwards, shows that its place in the route comes after the visitor has been invited to admire a view of the Palladian Bridge and ‘Stowe Castle’ (an eyecatcher of 1738) through the Doric Arch. The vista then closes in abruptly, and ‘A covered Walk leads to a Scene planted entirely with Evergreens, in the midst of which stands a Gothic cross of artificial stone’.⁴⁴ Stowe accounts from 1815 show that this evergreen walk was planted at the same time that the cross was installed, suggesting that it was deliberately created to contain

it. The cross arrived at Stowe in February 1815 on the *Dreadnought* barge via the Grand Junction Canal, into the care of the Master of the Building Department, John Broadway.⁴⁵ Broadway’s ‘Labour Accounts and Supplies’ for 1815 include ‘Planting by the Grotto and Gothic Cross’ and, for the four weeks ending 13 May 1815, record the labour of twenty-three men whose tasks included ‘Digging the borders and watering the shrubs planted by the Gothic Cross’.⁴⁶ These shrubs were probably laurels, which line the path today, but Broadway also cleverly made use of the existing mature yews, commonly associated with churchyards and death.

The existence of large yew stumps adjacent to the cross today show that it would have been overhung by mature yew trees in the early nineteenth century, and which can be seen in the 1827 engraving and in a recent photograph (Figs. 9 & 10). The narrowness of the path, which twists and turns through the undergrowth, means that it could only have been passed on foot, no more than two abreast. As the path rounds a corner, the cross is encountered suddenly, the bright artificial stone gleaming among the gloom of the evergreens. It was a personal, and possibly solitary, encounter, very different from the framed vistas and elegant carriage drives elsewhere in the gardens.

The immense popularity of Gothic fiction renders it highly likely that both the Marquess of Buckingham and his visitors were not only familiar with them, but quite possibly avid readers themselves; after all, as Henry Tilney observed, gentlemen did not only read 'better books'. Buckingham was a bibliophile, whose collection was reputed to number 20,000 volumes by the time of the 1848 sale.⁴⁷ One visitor who certainly would have been familiar with Gothic fiction was Lady Georgina North, daughter of the third Earl of Guildford who lived close to Stowe at Wroxton Abbey. Her sketchbook from 1814 to 1820 is an illuminating insight into the mind of just such a visitor who might be expected to venture through the evergreen walk at Stowe.⁴⁸ Lady Georgina, aged between sixteen and twenty-two at the time of the sketchbook, would undoubtedly have visited, although disappointingly her sketches do not contain any images of Stowe. However, they do reveal the strong link between her visual and literary imaginations. Drawing inspiration from classical and mythological sources as well as conventional holiday scenes, her accomplished sketches are often finished with a literary (mis-) quotation, ranging from *The Tempest* and *Paradise Lost* to James Thomson's *Seasons*. Furthermore, her sketchbook clearly reveals a taste for the Gothic. Sketches made

on a visit to Cliveden and Dropmore (home of Lord Grenville, the Marquis of Buckingham's brother) at the other end of Buckinghamshire forgo the grand houses and glorious views across the Thames valley. Instead, Lady Georgina chose to depict Dropmore's Fir Walk by twilight and a similarly gloomy walk at Cliveden, with a rustic stone hut with Gothic windows half-concealed in the shadows (Fig. 11). Such a garden feature was clearly not unique to Stowe. Other drawings are explicitly Gothic, one showing a ghostly figure looming over a hooded woman carrying a baby (Fig. 12). It is highly likely that she walked Stowe's evergreen walk and that her encounter with the Gothic cross fed an imagination that was already teeming with literary and visual imagery.

When Buckingham installed the cross in 1815, Gothic could be used in many different ways and with many different significations, determined by context as much as the architecture itself. Even if its most serious moments, Gothic architecture still carried an element of fantasy, a recreation or reconnection with the past. But whereas its political, ideological and antiquarian manifestations depended to a greater extent on reason and intellect, in its Romantic guise it depended on the emotions, stimulated directly by the senses or indirectly through association. Fantasy and imagination were essential elements of Romantic Gothic. Gothic could be playful, an architectural backdrop for dukes and dairymaids alike, or it could be more sinister, with undertones of demonic spirits, or moral and sexual transgression. James Wyatt and the rest of his family were virtuosos at creating this kind of architectural reverie, and, if they did have a hand in designing Stowe's cross, it would have been entirely in keeping with their other work, but in any case there was ample room within Gothic to accommodate such a fantastical aspect.

The Prince Regent's use of cast iron and Coade stone in his Carlton House Gothic conservatory set a precedent for how the Coade monument could be co-opted to create a similar effect at Stowe. Here,

however, the gloomy forest backdrop created a very different atmosphere, where old stories about crosses, Gothic fiction and notions of the sublime, all lent a deliciously menacing air. Ashridge's cross or well, although architecturally similar, parts company with Stowe's at this point. Its open and sunny setting (literally and metaphorically) contrasts with Stowe's forbidding shadows, playing Ashridge's Bonhomme against Stowe's Vindictive Monk. Gothic literature derived its atmosphere from Gothic architecture, which then in turn added the associations of Gothic literature to its armoury of effects.

As a movement, Gothic cannot be fully understood by studying one discipline separately from another. Likewise, Stowe's Gothic cross can only be apprehended by considering it at the nexus of garden, architectural, philosophical and literary history. There is a rich tradition of literature associated with Stowe, but in the case of the Gothic cross the literature inspired the garden, rather than the other way around. Far from being part of a political or iconographical narrative at Stowe, the cross stood alone as a sensory encounter. Buckingham's opportunistic appropriation of an existing monument utilised the supernatural associations of crosses and the sublime and terrible associations of Gothic architecture and a dark and gloomy forest walk, disseminated through literature from aesthetic philosophy to pulp fiction. In the cross at Stowe, the passions of Gothic were combined with the delights of the gardens to create a thrilling sensation of pleasurable terror.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article is an abridgement of my dissertation submitted for the MSt. in Literature and Arts, University of Oxford. Many thanks to my supervisor, Dr Oliver Cox, and the National Trust's curators and archivists at Stowe for their assistance.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The National Trust 'Restoring Stowe 2015–2019' <<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/stowe/projects/restoring-stowe-2015–2019>>.
- 2 Cliveden Conservation 'Recreating the Gothic Cross, National Trust, Stowe' <<http://www.clivedenconservation.com/project/gothic-cross-national-trust-stowe/>>.
- 3 [Seeley], *Stowe. A description of the house and gardens of ... Richard Grenville Nugent Chandos Temple, Marquess of Buckingham* (Buckingham, 1817, further edns. 1827, 1832, 1838).
- 4 A. Kelly, 'Eleanor Coade at Stowe', *The Georgian Group Journal*, 2 (1992), p. 99.
- 5 M. Bevington, 'The Gothic Cross', *The Stoic*, 190 (December 1992), p. 820.
- 6 Kelly, 'Eleanor Coade at Stowe', p. 97.
- 7 J. Beckett, *The Rise and Fall of the Grenvilles: dukes of Buckingham and Chandos, 1710–1921* (Manchester, 1994), p. 100.
- 8 See G. Clarke, 'Grecian Taste and Gothic Virtue', *Apollo*, 97 (June 1973) and J.M. Robinson, *Temples of Delight: Stowe landscape gardens* (Andover, 1994) for such iconographical interpretations of the eighteenth-century gardens.
- 9 K. Feluš, in *The secret life of the Georgian garden: beautiful objects & agreeable retreats* (London, 2016), details the practical uses and enjoyments of the great gardens.
- 10 The term 'Romantic Gothic' is used by Megan Aldrich to define this phase in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries but it is by no means identified by all historians of the Gothic Revival: *idem.*, *The Gothic Revival* (London, 1994), pp. 78–99. Peter Lindfield assesses these buildings more conventionally in terms of fidelity to medieval sources: *idem.* *Georgian Gothic: Medievalist Architecture, Furniture and Interiors 1730–1840* (Woodbridge, 2016), pp. 640–2.
- 11 The National Archives (hereafter TNA), C111/106 (E. Coade's Ornamental Stone Works, order, day and letter books 1813–1821) Order book 28 October 1815; Day Book June 1814.
- 12 For a fuller discussion of Coade Gothic, see A. Kelly, 'Mrs Coade's Gothic' *Country Life*, 2 June 1997.
- 13 Coade stone is discussed in detail in the recent article, C. Stanford, 'Revisiting the Origins of Coade Stone', *The Georgian Group Journal*, 24 (2016).

- 14 *Coade's gallery, or, exhibition in artificial stone, Westminster-Bridge-Road, ... being specimens from the manufactory, at King's Arms Stairs, Narrow Wall, Lambeth* (London, 1799), p. 22.
- 15 TNA, C111/106 Letter book 15 February 1815 and 2 March 1815; Order and Memorandum book 19 October 1814, Day book December 1814 and February 1815.
- 16 A. Kelly, *Mrs Coade's Stone* (Upton-upon-Severn, 1990), pp. 219–20.
- 17 'Candelabrum', V&A <<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O8857/candelabrum-candelabrum-hopper-thomas/>>.
- 18 *The Times*, 20 June 1811.
- 19 *Gentleman's Magazine*, June 1811.
- 20 M. Aldrich, *Gothic Revival* (London, 1994), p. 86.
- 21 TNA, C111/06 Day book December 1814.
- 22 J. Ruch, 'Regency Coade: a Study of the Coade Record Books, 1813–1821', *Architectural History* 12 (1968), p. 36.
- 23 The image can be seen on the front cover of *The Georgian Group Journal*, XXIV (2016).
- 24 TNA, C111/106 Letter book 20 October 1814.
- 25 A. Rimmer, *Ancient Stone Crosses of England* (London, 1875), p. 6.
- 26 For example, 'Antient Crosses – Headington Cross, Oxfordshire', *Gentleman's Magazine* 86:1 (Jan 1816); J. Britton, *The Beauties of England and Wales* vol. XV (London, 1814).
- 27 J.T. Harrison *Leisure-Hour Notes on Historical Buckingham* (Chicheley, 1972, 1st ed. 1909) p. 71.
- 28 Rimmer, pp. 79–80.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- 30 Plaque adjacent to the Bristol cross, Stourhead, Wiltshire (NT).
- 31 B.H. Cunnington, Some Annals of the Borough of Devizes Vol. II (Devizes, 1926), p. 57.
- 32 J. Mordaunt Crook and M.H. Port, (eds.) *History of the King's Works Vol VI, 1782–1851* (London, 1973) pp. 312–4; Kelly, *Mrs Coade's Stone*, p. 383.
- 33 Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre, G20/1/92, Benjamin Wyatt to William Salmon, 26 June 1813.
- 34 Royal Institute of British Architects (hereafter RIBA), SB18/2.
- 35 RIBA, SB20.
- 36 'The history of Ashridge House' <<http://www.ashridgehouse.org.uk/about-ashridge-house/#history>>.
- 37 Walpole to Lady Ossory, 27 June 1771 in W.S. Lewis et al. (eds.), *The Yale edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence* (New Haven, 1937–1983), vol. XXXII, p. 53.
- 38 J. Austen, 'Northanger Abbey' in R. Chapman, D. Le Faye, J. Austen-Leigh, K. Sutherland, (eds.) *The Complete Works and Letters of Jane Austen*, electronic edition (Charlottesville, 2008), Vol. V, p. 106.
- 39 P. Haining (ed.), *The Shilling Shockers*, (Letchworth, 1978), p. 13.
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 E. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful* (Oxford, 2015, first pub. 1757), pp. xiv, xxxv.
- 42 *Ibid.*, IV, vii.
- 43 *Ibid.*, II, iii.
- 44 *Stowe. A description of the house and gardens* (1817), p. 6.
- 45 TNA, C111/106 Letter book 2 March 1815.
- 46 Stowe Gardens, Buckinghamshire (NT), transcripts of archives held at Huntington Library, California, Labour accounts and supplies Box 18 (1,3).
- 47 Beckett, p. 120.
- 48 Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, MSS North IX e.8, sketchbook of Lady Georgina North.