

A Decade of Follies – The first ten years of the Follies Trust (2006-2016)

By Evelyn Mullally



Waddell Cunningham Mausoleum before and post restoration.

The Follies Trust has marked its tenth anniversary by launching its fifth publication, highlighting the diverse range of projects which it has undertaken since it started as a building preservation trust dedicated to the conservation of unique structures which generally aim to delight and often amuse. That such a young organisation should have achieved enough to produce an interesting book for every other year of its existence indicates the level of energy, enthusiasm and tenacity which is at its core. This latest publication is a celebration of the quirky and aesthetically pleasing structures themselves but also of the people behind their original commissioning and their recent conservation, and it brings remarkable credit to the Trust itself under the chairmanship of Primrose Wilson.

A range of contributors – well known in architectural conservation circles – write in praise of follies and about how the Trust came into being, as well as on the projects themselves: two Watch Houses in Tullylish, Co. Down; the Stroan Fountain in Co. Kilkenny; the Tower on Mullagh Hill, Co. Offaly; the Moorish Tower in Castlewella, Co. Down; the Ardglass Bathing

House and Rossglass Pig Crew in Lecale, Co. Down; Lord Limerick's Follies at Tollymore, Co. Down; the Rainey and Greg Mausolea at Knockbreda Graveyard, near Belfast; the Beresford Obelisk near Limavady, Co. Londonderry and the O'Grady Mausoleum at Knockainey, Co. Limerick.

Readers of *Perspective* will particularly appreciate the inclusion of a tribute to the late Dick Oram in connection with Lord Limerick's Follies which were restored in his memory on his beloved home Mourne Country turf. At the launch of the book on those follies in 2010, Edward McParland commented that Dick was like their architect, Thomas Wright, who was recorded thus: '[his] temper was gentle and affable, and his mind was generous'.

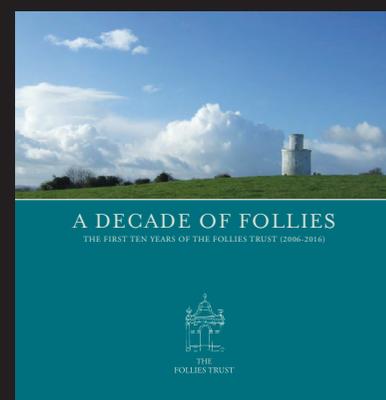
A picture essay by Edward Wilson entitled 'Folly Jollies!' shows Follies Trust members on various tours at home and further afield, hunting out whimsical and eccentric follies for amusement and education. The minutes of the first meeting of the Trust record, he says, 'Enjoyment should be part of the remit of the Follies Trust.' The rich diversity of what can be discovered is striking: from well-known sights such as the Connolly

Folly (built, it is pointed out, not for frivolity but to provide employment in hard times) and Tir na nOg at Mount Stewart to the more obscure such as a Hindu-Gothic gatelodge at Dromana House, Rathlacken gazebo and belvederes in Co. Westmeath.

The publication also looks forward to potential projects, if funding can be found: the Lion Gate at Mote Park, Co. Roscommon; Hollymount Church, Co. Mayo, with a Gothic cast-iron spire, and Cornelius O'Brien's Column at Liscannor, Co. Clare, among them.

There can be little doubt that structures such as these are generous and joyful, perfect antidotes to the proliferation of the bland and welcome elements of visual and historical surprise in the landscape. Ten cheers to the Follies Trust on its anniversary, on its volunteer effort and work, and on this illuminating publication. ■

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