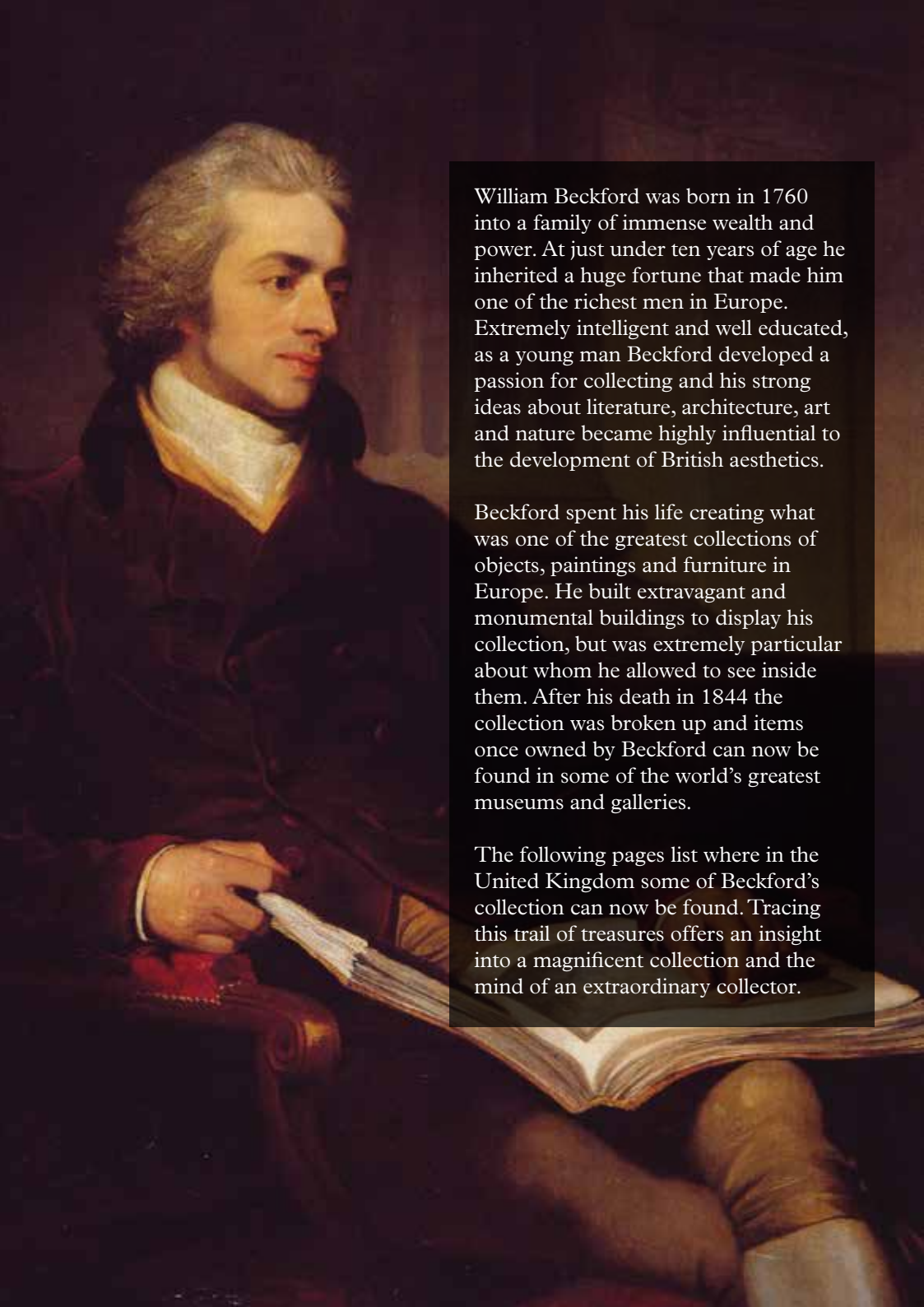




William Beckford

1760-1844

The Treasures of Beckford's Collection



William Beckford was born in 1760 into a family of immense wealth and power. At just under ten years of age he inherited a huge fortune that made him one of the richest men in Europe. Extremely intelligent and well educated, as a young man Beckford developed a passion for collecting and his strong ideas about literature, architecture, art and nature became highly influential to the development of British aesthetics.

Beckford spent his life creating what was one of the greatest collections of objects, paintings and furniture in Europe. He built extravagant and monumental buildings to display his collection, but was extremely particular about whom he allowed to see inside them. After his death in 1844 the collection was broken up and items once owned by Beckford can now be found in some of the world's greatest museums and galleries.

The following pages list where in the United Kingdom some of Beckford's collection can now be found. Tracing this trail of treasures offers an insight into a magnificent collection and the mind of an extraordinary collector.

Beckford's Tower & Museum

After he moved to Bath in 1822 Beckford immediately began to create a garden that stretched from his home in Lansdown Crescent up to the top of Lansdown Hill, where in 1827 he built Lansdown Tower. Designed by H. E. Goodridge, Lansdown Tower was Beckford's retreat, offering magnificent views of the surrounding countryside and housing some of the most treasured items from his collection.

Today the Tower is the only museum in the world dedicated to the life of William Beckford and is home to a collection of paintings, furniture and objects from his collection. Highlights include the original construction model for Fonthill Abbey; a monumental marble table designed for the Tower, and Beckford's *Objects of Vertu* paintings.

Visitor information

Beckford's Tower & Museum
Lansdown Road, Bath, BA1 9BH
Tel: 01225 460705
www.beckfordstower.org.uk
Open March – End of October
Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays
10.30am – 5.00pm



Victoria and Albert Museum

The Victoria and Albert Museum holds the largest, most diverse and most significant collection in London of decorative arts owned by William Beckford. There is a self-contained section within the British Galleries devoted to the Beckford Collection (Room 120), while other Beckford items can be found in the Gilbert Gallery (Room 71). Beckford's furniture can be seen in Room 120, his lacquer in the Japan Gallery (Room 45), ceramics in Rooms 136 and 145, and enamels in Room 63.

The largest part of the Beckford collection is the metalwork and mounted pieces, ranging from a majestic silver-gilt salver engraved with heraldic devices to mounted porcelains and hardstones, all produced by specialist craftsmen to designs supplied by Beckford and Gregorio Franchi.

Examples of neo-classical French and English silver purchased by Beckford and of superlative quality are also in the museum.

Furniture designed in the historicising style for Beckford can be found in the museum, comprising early pieces such as the Holbein Cabinet, designed for Fonthill Abbey, a pietre dure cabinet designed by Franchi, and a coffer designed for Lansdown Tower. Lacquer was a life-long passion of Beckford's, and two renowned examples of his collection of high-quality lacquer, the 'Van Diemen' Box and the 'Mazarin' chest, can also be seen.

Prints and drawings related to Beckford and Beckford items are also in the museum, and can be seen by appointment.

Visitor information

Victoria and Albert Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 2RL
Tel: 020 7942 2000
www.vam.ac.uk



British Museum

The British Museum holds a small but important collection owned by Beckford. Of special interest are the mounted ivory sleeve vases from Fonthill Abbey, on view in Room 46. Beckford ceramics ranging from Greek vases to French porcelain are also in the museum's collection, and can be seen by appointment, as can a significant holding of prints and drawings related to Beckford.



Visitor information

British Museum, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG
Tel: 020 7323 8000
www.britishmuseum.org

The Wallace Collection

The Beckford items at the Wallace Collection are superb examples of their type. The elaborate 18th-century roll-top desk, purchased in Paris and an expression of Beckford's Francophile taste, is on view in the Oval Drawing Room. In contrast to this, Beckford commissioned two coffers in a Renaissance/Gothic style to correspond to the interiors of Fonthill Abbey; these are on view in the Sixteenth Century Gallery. In the same gallery is an Augsburg iron cabinet of the late sixteenth century and an oil painting by Corneille de Lyon, both from Beckford's collections.



Visitor information

The Wallace Collection, Hertford House, Manchester Square, London W1U 3BN
Tel: 020 7563 9500
www.wallacecollection.org

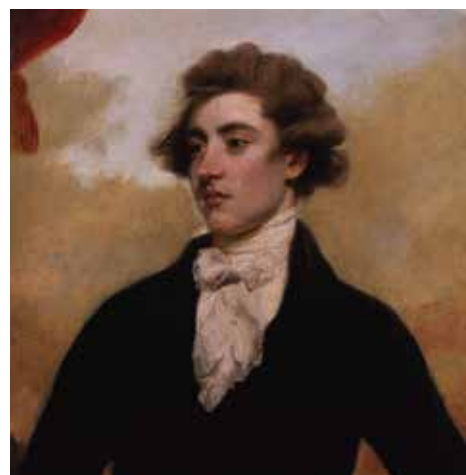
The National Gallery

The collecting of paintings was one of Beckford's greatest passions. In particular he collected Old Masters and was a pioneer in the collecting of early Italian Renaissance pictures. The National Gallery has twenty-five paintings that were once in Beckford's collection including Nicolas Lancret's *Four Ages of Man* series and the full length *Philip IV of Spain in Brown and Silver* by Velazquez. In the final years of his life Beckford sold five pictures directly to the Gallery, including two of his most significant works *The Doge Leonardo Loredan* by Giovanni Bellini and possibly the most treasured painting in his collection, Raphael's *Saint Catherine of Alexandria*.



Visitor information

The National Gallery
Trafalgar Square, London
WC2N 5DN
Tel: 020 7747 2885
www.nationalgallery.org.uk



Visitor information

National Portrait Gallery
St Martin's Place, London
EC2H 0HE
Tel: 020 7306 0055
www.npg.org.uk

National Portrait Gallery

The National Portrait Gallery is home to one of the greatest representations of William Beckford, the portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Painted in 1782, not long after Beckford's twenty-first birthday and following his return from Europe, the portrait remained in Beckford's ownership until his death. The pose and background give it a romantic appearance and it was this image of himself that Beckford reproduced in 1835 when he published his *Recollections of an Excursion to the Monasteries of Alcobaca and Batalha*.

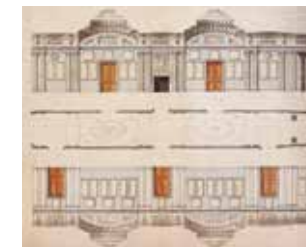
Sir John Soane's Museum

In 1787 John Soane visited Fonthill having been commissioned by Beckford to undertake some alterations to his father's house and design a new picture gallery. Soane's designs for the gallery and for an elaborate state bed for Fonthill are in the collection of drawings at the museum and can be viewed by booked appointment. Also in

the Soane collection is Hogarth's *The Rake's Progress*, originally in the collection of Beckford's father, Alderman William Beckford. Soane purchased the paintings in 1802 when Beckford sold many paintings from his father's collection. A visit to the museum also provides an insight into the mind of one of Beckford's contemporary collectors.

Visitor information

Sir John Soane's Museum
13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London,
WC2A 3BP
Tel: 020 7405 2107
www.soane.org



Tate Britain

In 1799 J. M. W. Turner spent three weeks at Fonthill recording the construction of Fonthill Abbey and producing a series of watercolours depicting the Abbey from different parts of the estate and at different times of day. The Turner sketches from Fonthill can be viewed by appointment or by searching the Turner Worldwide database on the Tate's website.

Visitor information

Tate Britain, Millbank,
London, SW1P 4RG.
Tel: 020 7887 8888
www.tate.org.uk/britain



Charlecote Park (The National Trust)

In the September of 1823 George Hammond Lucy of Charlecote Park in Warwickshire attended the Fonthill Abbey sale and purchased over fifty lots, spending £3,431.10.6d on items from Beckford's collection. The Charlecote Park collection includes fine examples of Beckford's taste in oriental porcelain as well as Japanese lacquer. The state bed from the Lancaster State Bedroom at Fonthill Abbey made from the panels of a 17th century Indian settee can be seen upstairs at Charlecote, and a set of side tables made for the King Edward's Gallery are in the main hall. Of most note is the collection of pietre dure, including an ebony cabinet inlaid with pietre dure panels and a casket said to have been from the Pitti Palace in Florence.

The highlight of the Charlecote collection is the Borghese Table, one of Beckford's most famous pieces of furniture. The large 16th century pietre dure tabletop was said to have originated from the Borghese Palace and after he purchased it Beckford had the oak base designed to suit the table's location in the King Edward's Gallery at Fonthill Abbey.



Visitor information

Charlecote Park (The National Trust)
Wellesbourne, Warwick,
Warwickshire CV35 9ER
Tel: 01789 470277
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-charlecotepark



Upton House (The National Trust)

The full-length portrait of Beckford painted by George Romney in 1781 can be seen at Upton House, depicting the twenty-one year old Beckford with all the arrogance of a young man soon to take control of his immense fortune.



Visitor Information

Upton House (The National Trust) near Banbury, Warwickshire OX15 6HT
Tel: 01295 670266
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-uptonhouse

The Barber Institute of Fine Arts

At the Barber Institute can be found a fine example of Beckford's interest in mounted hard stones, the heliotrope jasper bowl on a silver gilt mount designed by Paul Storr. Also in the collection is a gold teapot and stand engraved with Beckford's heraldry.

Visitor Information

The Barber Institute of Fine Arts
University of Birmingham,
Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TS
Tel: 0121 414 7333
www.barber.org.uk

Fitzwilliam Museum

The Fitzwilliam collection includes the 1538 triptych *The Lamentation with the Prophet Daniel and St Peter* by Pierre Reymond of a quality and High Renaissance style that typified Beckford's taste. The museum also has a painting of an Italian Landscape by Karel Dujardin once in Beckford's collection.

Visitor Information

The Fitzwilliam Museum
Trumpington Street, Cambridge
CB2 1RB
Tel: 01223 332900
www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk



Brodick Castle

Brodick Castle is home to more than 200 items once owned by William Beckford. The Beckford collection came to Brodick through Beckford's youngest daughter, Susan Euphemia (1786-1859) who was the wife of Alexander, 10th Duke of Hamilton (1767-1852). She inherited much of the Beckford collection and by descent the collection passed to William, 12th Duke of Hamilton (d. 1895). Under the terms of a Trust Disposition and Settlement of his property in 1893, the collection passed to William's only child Mary Louise, later Duchess of Montrose, and was accepted by Her Majesty's Treasury in lieu of inheritance tax upon her death in 1957, and allocated by her express wish to the National Trust for Scotland, as part of the Brodick Castle estate.

Visitor information

Brodick Castle
(National Trust for Scotland)
Brodick, Isle of Arran,
Ayrshire & Arran KA27 8HY
Tel: 0844 493 2152
www.nts.org.uk/Property/13/

The collection is renowned for the mounted hardstones and porcelains that are so evocative of Beckford's taste. The mounts are in both historicising and orientalisising styles, and reflect the ambitious design concepts, attention to detail and first-rate craftsmanship demanded by Beckford. Many of these pieces are to be found in the Library, the Boudoir Landing and the Red Gallery.

Also to be seen in the China Room off the Red Gallery is the tea-service made by Barr, Flight and Barr, commissioned by Beckford on the occasion of the marriage of Susan Euphemia to Alexander Hamilton in 1810. Beckford's favourite armorial devices of cinquefoil, martlet and Latimer cross are used to create an overwhelming and unprecedented demonstration of lineage.

Other English and Continental porcelains owned by Beckford can be seen throughout Brodick Castle, as can silverware in the neo-classical style he purchased, and in the historicising style he commissioned, in addition to paintings, furniture and works of art.



National Museum of Scotland

The National Museum holds a wide array of silver-gilt tableware owned by and designed for Beckford. Many of the pieces are in the conventional neo-classical style, simply engraved with the owner's armorials. A neo-classical tea pot, stand and sugar bowl, however, have been elaborately engraved with a design of Beckford heraldic motifs over the entire surface, and new pieces with armorial-shaped feet have been added. Beckford's passion for the Orient is expressed in the teapot and a tea set based on the form of Chinese stoneware. A ladle and three sugar tongs, in an historicising 16th-century style are also in the museum alongside a large salver of Meissen porcelain from the 'Statholder' service.

Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum

Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow has in its collection a number of items related to Beckford, which can be seen by appointment.

The most significant for a Beckford enthusiast is the silver-gilt two-handled bowl, made in 1809 by Paul Storr, the leading London goldsmith of the time. It is engraved with Beckford and Hamilton heraldic motifs, and was a first birthday gift by Beckford to his grandson, the future 11th Duke of Hamilton. Other pieces include a remarkable set of four silver-gilt preserve dishes inspired by Oriental, Indian and European designs.

Visitor information

National Museum of Scotland
Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JF
Tel: 0131 225 7534
www.nms.ac.uk

Visitor information

Kelvingrove Art Gallery and
Museum, Argyle Street, Glasgow
G3 8AG
Beckford items available to view
by appointment.
Tel: 0141 276 9599
www.glasgowmuseums.com

Some other places with items from Beckford's Collection

Anglesey Abbey

The home to a pair of Claude paintings that took Beckford nearly two years to purchase.

Anglesey Abbey (The National Trust)
Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB25 9EJ
Tel: 01223 810080
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/angleseyabbey

Chiddingstone Castle

A rare Japanese lacquer casket from the late 1630s.

The Denys Eyre Bower Bequest
Chiddingstone Castle, Chiddingstone,
nr Edenbridge, Kent TN8 7AD
01892 870347
www.chiddingstonecastle.org.uk

Burghley House

A superb late 18th century hardstone and silver-gilt casket

Burghley House
Stamford, Lincs, PE9 3JY
Tel: 01780 752451
www.burghley.co.uk

Elton Hall

Cabinets on stands with lacquer panels designed by Vulliamy.

Elton Hall
Nr. Peterborough, PE8 6SH
Tel: 01832 280468
www.eltonhall.com
Limited opening.

The Holburne Museum

Some pieces of porcelain and metalwork as well as two paintings by Casali from Fonthill Splendens.

The Holburne Museum,
Great Pulteney Street, Bath BA2 4DB
See website for details.
www.holburne.org

Parham Park

Portrait of Alderman Beckford by Reynolds that was in William Beckford's collection until his death.

Parham Park and Gardens
Storrington, Nr Pulborough,
West Sussex RH20 4HS
Tel: 01903 742021
www.parhaminsussex.co.uk

Sudeley Castle

A painting of Fonthill 'Splendens' by Hendrick De Cort commissioned by William Beckford in 1791

Sudeley Castle
Winchcombe, Gloucestershire
GL54 5JD
Tel: 01242 602308
www.sudeleycastle.co.uk

Painting can be seen by going on one of the connoisseur tours of the house (and asking guide), see website for details.

The Lord Mayor's Chapel, Bristol

Stained glass from Beckford's collection including window of Thomas à Beckett by Benjamin West.

Lord Mayor's Chapel/ St Mark's,
College Green, Park Street, Bristol
BS1 5TB



Recommended reading for more information on the life of William Beckford and his collection.

William Beckford

Vathek, 3rd edition, 1816.

The Journal of William Beckford in Portugal and Spain 1787-1788. Edited by Boyd Alexander, London, 1954, reprinted Nonsuch Books, 2005.

Life at Fonthill 1807-1822. From the correspondence of William Beckford, edited by Boyd Alexander, London, 1957, reprinted by Nonsuch Books, 2005.

Boyd Alexander

England's Wealthiest Son. A Study of William Beckford, Centaur, London, 1962.

Brian Fothergill

William Beckford, Faber, London, 1979.

James Lees-Milne

William Beckford, Compton Russell, Wiltshire, 1976.

Derek Ostergard

ed., *William Beckford 1760-1844: An Eye for the Magnificent*, Yale, New Haven & London, 2001.

Clive Wainwright

The Romantic Interior: The British Collector at Home 1750-1850, Yale, New Haven & London, 1989.

Images

Front cover	Willes Maddox, <i>Views of Lansdown Tower</i> , 1844, Beckford Tower Trust
Page 3	<i>Objects of Vertu</i> , Staircase and Tower exterior, Beckford Tower Trust
Page 4	Van Diemen Box and Burwash plate © Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Page 5	Ivory sleeve vase © Trustees of British Museum The Riesner Desk by kind permission of the Trustees of the Wallace Collection, London
Page 6	Giovanni Bellini, <i>The Doge Leonardo Lorendan</i> © The National Gallery, London Sir Joshua Reynolds, <i>William Beckford</i> © National Portrait Gallery, London
Page 7	John Soane, Design for Galley by courtesy of the Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum J.M.W Turner, <i>Fonthill Abbey from South East</i> © Tate, London, 2010
Page 8	Cabinet at Charlecote Park © NTPL/Andreas von Einsiedel Vase courtesy of Edmund Fairfax Lucy, Charlecote Park (The National Trust) Detail of tabletop at Charlecote Park © NTPL/Derrick E. Witty
Page 9	George Romney, <i>William Beckford</i> at Upton House Warwickshire © NTPL/John Hammond <i>The Lamentation with the Prophet Daniel and St Peter</i> © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
Page 10	Tea cup and saucer by Barr courtesy of Scotlandsimages.com/National Trust for Scotland
Page 12	Chiddingstone Casket © The Denys Eyre Bower Bequest. Chiddingstone Castle Burghley Casket © The Burghley House Collection <i>Alderman Beckford</i> by Reynolds from the Collection, Parham Park, West Sussex <i>Fonthill Splendens</i> by Hendrick De Cort, Courtesy of Sudeley Castle, Gloucestershire
Back cover	<i>Rarest articles of Vertu</i> , from John Rutter, <i>Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey</i> , 1823, Beckford Tower Trust

The Beckford Tower Trust

The Beckford Tower Trust was established in 1977 by Declaration of Trust to preserve and maintain for public benefit buildings, features and objects of historical and architectural interest relating to the life and work of William Beckford (1760-1844), in particular Beckford's Tower in Bath. It aims to maintain the Tower and Museum collection as a public museum, and to educate the public in the life and work of William Beckford.



BECKFORD'S
TOWER AND
MUSEUM

Support the Trust

For more information on how you can help support the work of the Beckford Tower Trust or donate to our Annual Fund please contact

The Administrator
Beckford Tower Trust,
1 Royal Crescent, Bath, BA1 2LR
Tel: 01225 460705
tower@bptrust.org.uk
www.beckfordstower.org.uk

The Beckford Society

The International Beckford Society was founded in 1995 with the aim of promoting an interest in William Beckford of Fonthill, encouraging Beckford studies and scholarship through publications and supporting the preservation of Beckford's Tower and other buildings, landscapes and objects associated with Beckford and his circle.



For information on membership contact

Sidney Blackmore
The Timber Cottage, Crockerton,
Warminster, Wiltshire
BA12 8AX
Sidney.Blackmore@btinternet.com
www.beckfordsociety.org



William Beckford

1760-1844

*Commemorating the 250th
anniversary of the birth of
William Beckford 1760-1844*



BECKFORD'S
TOWER AND
MUSEUM

