

details. The thought-provoking 'topic boxes', a regular feature of the Pevsner City Guides series, addresses matters such as 'The Leeds Look', 'Materials and Methods' and, more momentarily, 'Lost Buildings', under which heading are detailed prominent buildings such as the so-called 'Castle', more accurately a mediaeval manor house. The collective impression is of the remarkably efficient erasure of the past by successive generations of builders.

Susan Wrathmell has created an immensely readable, useful and informative volume, which succeeds as a reference point for both academics and casual scholars alike. Although comparing the original Pevsner accounts of Leeds to this independent and comprehensive volume is not wholly reasonable, the links remain strong and Wrathmell is informed by, and frequently refers to, the original documentation of both Pevsner and Radcliffe. More British cities, large and small, should benefit from the Pevsner Architectural Guides treatment.

SPECIAL MEMBER VISIT

A special walking tour of Georgian Leeds has been arranged for Georgian Group members on Saturday 18 March 2006. See page 48 for details.

Europe Swept by Rhinomania *Julia Allen*

Clara's Grand Tour: Travels with a rhinoceros in eighteenth-century Europe
Glynis Ridley
Atlantic Books 2004, £14.99
ISBN 1 84554010 X 222

It is hard to imagine a more harebrained idea than that of driving a live rhinoceros - all 6,000

lbs of it - in a horse-drawn waggon around the cities of Europe and charging for a look at it. Yet that is what an obscure Dutch sea captain did with spectacular success between 1741 and 1758, earning himself a fortune and a baronetcy in the process; and, because he was a consummate showman and publicist, a great deal is known about his and his charge's progress, from fliers he had posted in advance of his visits to a town, from newspaper advertisements and from accounts of those who saw the animal. Her likeness could be seen everywhere, on canvas, paper, porcelain, medals and in costly artefacts; no rhinoceros has ever exceeded her in fame or popularity. Glynis Ridley had an embarrassment of riches on which to base her narrative but that did not stop her from venturing into the enclosure of two Indian rhinoceroses at Cincinnati Zoo, the better to understand the difficulties encountered by the enterprising Dutchman and, literally, to get a feel for her subject. An earlier version of her book was awarded the University of London's Institute for Historical Research Prize.

Clara was born in Assam, probably in the summer of 1738. Her mother was killed just months after her birth: and for her first two-and-a-half years she lived in Calcutta as a pet in the house of J A Sichterman of the Dutch East India Company, where she grew as 'tame as a lamb' and was allowed to 'run round the Tables of Gentlemen and Ladies like a Lap-dog'. Her increasing size and appetite may have been what decided Sichterman to sell Clara to Douwemout van der Meer, an employee of the same Company, who had spotted her potential to earn him riches 'beyond the dreams of avarice', if he could only get her to Europe alive.

That he succeeded in doing so was his first considerable achievement.

She survived the perilous, eight-month sea voyage in a cage on the deck of his ship, which berthed in Rotterdam on 22 July 1741, and then spent some months in Leiden, where Van der Meer came from, while he raised money, planned their itineraries, hired personnel and had a stout travelling waggon built.

Wherever she went Clara drew crowds: royalty, nobles, naturalists, artists and the merely curious flocked to her enclosure, all ready to part with their money. What were they expecting to see: 'behemoth', 'the true unicorn', 'the arch-enemy of the elephant', a beast that with its horn could 'plough the ground much faster than a farmer', that could swim and dive in the water 'like a duck', and whose hide looked 'as if it is covered with shells', an animal furnished by nature to 'look like a Man in Armour', one that secretes a potion, 'which has cured many people from the falling sickness'? Van der Meer did not need Samuel Johnson to tell him that 'Promise, large promise, is the soul of an advertisement'; and above the long texts on the woodcuts and engravings he commissioned was a picture of Clara, usually giving an exaggerated notion of her size, making much of her exotic origin and clearly depicting the deep folds of her skin.

Between 1515 and Clara's appearance on the scene, practically every representation of the rhinoceros shows the influence of Dürer's widely-distributed woodcut; but, whereas Dürer's beast looks as though its armour could be taken off - indeed, Ridley suggests it was depicted accoutred for combat with an elephant - those of less competent artists seem to be encased in armour that is an integral part of their bodies, and all have the so-called 'Dürer-hornlet' on the shoulder. James Byam Shaw says, 'Dürer has caught the character of the animal

remarkably well' and F J Cole goes so far as to say that the 1515 woodcut 'envisages the distinctive congruity of the animal better than later ones executed from life'.

Clara changed for ever the popular European perception of the rhinoceros. Nothing about her suggested ferocity or combativeness: she stood placidly in a wooden booth, the walls of which she could have knocked down in a trice, eating and drinking her way through '70 Pounds of Hay,' '25 Pounds of Bread' and '14 Pails of Water', occasionally accepting a glass of ale, or a piece of orange peel, enjoying having tobacco smoke blown up her nostrils, and showing her affection for her young keeper by licking his face with her velvet-textured tongue.

It is a good corrective to read of instances of kindness to animals taking place in an age more often associated with cruelty. We know all too much about baiting and other staged combats, the vivisection of dogs and the casual brutality meted out to working animals. Cruelty, however, was not always deliberately inflicted: it could be the result of ignorance. Van der Meer kept Clara alive for almost twenty years, so he must have provided her with an adequate and suitable diet and managed to stop her admirers from giving her too many titbits. A young female elephant exhibited in London in 1720 died as a result of the ignorance of its keepers, the ministrations of a farrier and 'the great quantity of ale the spectators continually gave it'. And the first zebra presented to Queen Charlotte (1762), 'would eat almost any thing, such as bread, meat and tobacco'; not surprisingly, it soon had to be replaced by another that subsisted 'entirely upon hay'.

Rhinomania swept Europe: women wore their hair *à la rhinocéros*; a wealthy dandy decked out

his carriage horses to look like rhinoceroses; poems were written, medals struck. Clara was seen by thousands of people in the course of her years on the road, thousands more saw her image; and whenever her popularity appeared to be on the wane, a rumour of a serious accident or her death - perhaps started by her astute owner - guaranteed that it would surge again. Then, suddenly, when on a visit to London, she died on 14 April 1758. Just the bald fact is recorded. Hans Sloane, who moved quickly in 1720 to procure the body of the young female elephant for dissection, had died five years before Clara, but William Stukeley, one of the men who had hacked up this animal in torrential rain in Sloane's garden, was still alive, as was John Hunter, who is thought to have anatomised some 500 different species; one or other could have put her remains to good use, but there is no record of their doing so.

Clara's Grand Tour has a wonderful story to tell: but unfortunately, Ridley, whose breathless enthusiasm for her subject shows itself on every page, fails to do it justice. Her thinking is muddled, her syntax poor, her text repetitious: sources are misquoted and not always acknowledged, let alone footnoted; and we hear far too much about what 'Van der Meer must have thought' or 'Clara may well have done'. There is no index. Some of the choices of illustration seem perverse and foolish: furthermore, the plates are not numbered, and only once or twice are they tied in with the text. Ridley wastes time describing pictures she reproduces and does the reader no service by describing those she does not. Pictures of Douwemout van der Meer and of Clara's waggon exist; yet we are shown neither. Much care must have gone into the design of this attractively produced book. Would that the same degree of care had gone into the editing of the text and the choice of illustrations.

Playground for a Prince of Pleasure

Sue Berry

Set for a King: 200 Years of Gardening at the Royal Pavilion
Mike Jones

Brighton Royal Pavilion, Museums and Libraries 2005, £19.99
ISBN 0 948725 62 9

Mike Jones, Head of Conservation and Design at Brighton's Royal Pavilion, is a superb illustrator. His pictures of the Pavilion and the plants used in the Pavilion gardens, with the dates of their introduction, give an excellent perspective on the evolution of the site. Producers of other garden history books, or indeed books on houses, might usefully take note.

The illustrations show how Henry Holland's changes to the Pavilion, especially his insertion of French windows and the addition of conservatories in 1801, changed the whole feel of the Pavilion and made it a more dominant feature of the Steine (the town's promenade). As The Prince of Wales acquired more land, so the Pavilion gained greater privacy. Finally in 1805 he managed to secure agreement to shut busy East Street (the main road into the town which ran right past his front door on the west side of the Pavilion) and link the house to the grounds he already owned on the Street's west side. New Road was provided by the Prince as the substitute for East Street and served then, as now, as the west boundary of the estate.

The newly-integrated grounds offered great opportunities for gardeners with aspirations, amongst whom was Humphry Repton. His Red Book is a fascinating document, not least because he includes views of the townscape around the Steine