

# The Follies of East Sussex: Eccentric Architectural Oddities

The rolling hills and picturesque coastline of East Sussex, England, are not only known for their natural beauty but also for a peculiar collection of architectural oddities known as follies. These eccentric structures, dating from the 18th to the 20th centuries, range from whimsical temples and towers to elaborate mock ruins. Follies were often built by wealthy landowners as a way to display their wealth and eccentricity, and they have become a fascinating glimpse into the past.

## Martello Towers: Fortified Follies

Dotting the coast of East Sussex are a series of circular Martello towers, built as part of a defensive network during the Napoleonic Wars. These sturdy structures, with their thick walls and gun ports, were designed to protect against a potential French invasion. However, they soon proved to be ineffective as military installations and were repurposed for various uses, including as follies.



## Follies of East Sussex (Follies of England Book 12)

by Fabian Frenzel

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One notable example is the Martello Tower at Pevensey Bay, which was purchased by the eccentric collector, Dr. Magnus Volk. Volk transformed the tower into a folly, complete with a rooftop garden and a miniature railway. Today, visitors can explore the tower and learn about its fascinating history.

### **Whimsical Temples and Gazebos**

In the heart of East Sussex, surrounded by lush gardens, lies the quirky Petworth House. Amidst its many attractions is a series of whimsical temples and gazebos, built in the 18th century as a personal paradise for the Earl of Egremont. One of the highlights is the Shell House, adorned with thousands of seashells and boasting a domed roof that resembles a giant snail shell.

Another notable folly is Sham Castle, located in the village of Alfriston. This mock castle, built in the 18th century, is made of flint and has a distinctive castellated tower. Sham Castle has been used for various purposes, including as a shooting lodge and a guest house, and is now open to the public.

### **Elaborate Mock Ruins**

East Sussex is also home to a number of elaborate mock ruins, which were popular in the 18th and 19th centuries. These structures were designed to evoke a sense of decay and grandeur, and were often built in imitation of ancient Roman temples or medieval castles.

One of the most impressive mock ruins is Ashburnham Place, located near Battle. Built in the 18th century, this folly is modeled after an ancient Roman amphitheater and features a series of arched entrances and a large central courtyard. Ashburnham Place has been used for various purposes, including as a setting for plays and concerts, and is now a popular tourist destination.

## The Allure of Follies

The follies of East Sussex are a testament to the eccentricities of the past. These architectural oddities, once dismissed as impractical or even foolish, have now become cherished landmarks. They offer a glimpse into the imaginations of their creators and a reminder that even the most unusual structures can add a touch of intrigue and whimsy to the landscape.

Whether you're a history enthusiast, an architecture buff, or simply someone who appreciates the quirky, the follies of East Sussex are sure to capture your attention. Explore these architectural marvels and discover the hidden stories that lie within their walls.



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