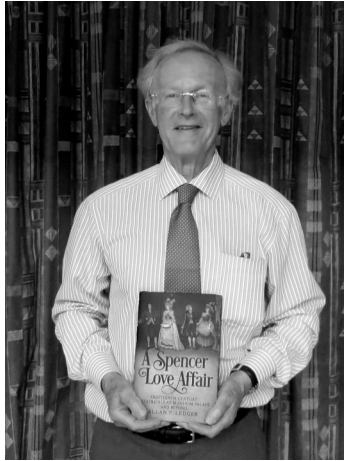


A Good Read

The Scandal of Blenheim Amateur Luvvies

The more assiduous readers of *The Wychwood* will remember that the last time we came across Allan Ledger of Ascott, he was a chorister at the Queen's Coronation. As you would expect, things have moved on since then. After years as a history teacher and one-time guide at Blenheim Palace, he is now a local author with a new book which has already gathered some very respectable reviews.



If this were all, it would be interesting enough but the book is much more wide-ranging, taking in the fashion for amateur theatricals in the great country houses and considering connections with Jane Austen, whose *Mansfield Park* also alludes to the dangers of such private dramatics leading to real life drama for the participants.

Life at Blenheim

Allan Ledger has researched far and wide to illuminate the many people with some connection to Blenheim and Lady Charlotte and her husband and the result

Real Life Drama

The book in question is *A Spencer Love*

Affair: Eighteenth

Theatricals at

Blenheim and

Beyond, published

by Fonthill Media.

At its centre is the

tale of how Lady

Charlotte Spencer,

the favourite

daughter of the 4th

Duke of

Marlborough,

came to know an

Oxford Vicar far

below her social

status, the

Reverend Edward Nares, through amateur

theatricals at Blenheim Palace. She

subsequently eloped with him and was

banished from Blenheim Palace for the

rest of her short life.



is a good description of life at Blenheim and in high society in the 18th century.

His trump card is the access he had to the two-volume diaries of Edward Nares, which for long had been unexplored in the library of Merton College and which give the other side of the affair and its aftermath. The

result of all his research over more than five years is an erudite but entertaining work, clearly written and with generous illustrations, many in colour.

Alan Vickers