

PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

Quarterly Journal



DANIEL COLLINS (1687/8-1753)
Maternal grand-uncle of Parson Woodforde

By kind permission of Mrs Mary Quaife

Near yonder copse, where once the garden smil'd,
 And still where many a garden flower grows wild;
 There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
 The village preacher's modest mansion rose.
 A man he was, to all the country dear,
 And passing rich with forty pounds a year:
 Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
 Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change, his place;
 Unpractised he to fawn, or seek for power,
 By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;
 Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,
 More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise.
 His house was known to all the vagrant train,
 He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain;
 The long remembered beggar was his guest,
 Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
 The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,
 Claimed kindred there, and had his claims allowed;
 The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,
 Sate by his fire, and talked the night away;
 Wept o'er his wounds, or tales of sorrow done,
 Shouldered his crutch, and shewed how fields were won.
 Pleased with his guests, the good man learned to glow;
 And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
 Careless their merits, or their faults to scan,
 His pity gave e'er charity began.

– Oliver Goldsmith: *The Deserted Village* (1770)

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EDITORIAL

The Chairman's Notes which appeared in the Spring 1995 Journal were the last to be written by our Chairman and Treasurer George Bunting. He did not indeed found the Parson Woodforde Society, but it may quite confidently be stated that he has created it, in its present successful form. Without his forethought and guiding hand it is a matter of doubt whether the Society would even be in existence today; or if it was still alive, it would certainly not be in the flourishing condition which we have come to take for granted. In looking back over so many years of happy and fruitful collaboration – in all that time it is literally true that we have never once exchanged a “cross word” – I can do no more than simply thank him, both personally and on behalf of the Society we have both served; and wish his successor a happy and prosperous tenure of the office he is now handing over.

Reading the Notes, my attention was captured by a phrase in them: “a new management team”. This may to some readers suggest the likelihood of further changes; and it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that one or two may wonder if I, too, were not involved in such innovations.

Now, I have edited the Society's Journal since 1970, for a whole quarter-century. By any standard, it is a long time – some may think too long. With this in mind, attending the AGM, at the time of our annual Frolic, I have on several occasions in the course of delivering the ‘Editor's Report’ made what amounts to the same speech. I have said that if any one of our members really wants to have a go at editing the Journal, and is willing to take on the hard work involved, then I would not only hand over the reins of office willingly, but also give that person all the help it was in my power to bestow.

That, at least, is what I meant to say, and what I thought I had said. Judge, then, my utter astonishment, to have my remarks quoted back at me in a garbled and, indeed, travestied form; as though I were desperate to get rid of the job and wanted to off-load it on to anyone who might show any disposition towards taking it on.

You see – don't you? – how this came about. Someone who was at an AGM and remembered what I had said only imperfectly has quoted my remarks to another person who was not present; and he or she has passed it on, with added variations. When this sort of thing occurs, in a very short time what is going the rounds bears very little resemblance to anything that was actually said.

It is all just like the mediaeval bestiaries. They start off well, with

a lifelike picture of, say, an elephant. This is then copied, and re-copied. The copyists never go back to the original, but imitate one another. They live in regions where a herd of wild elephants is unlikely to appear in the course of an afternoon walk. They have not the least idea of what an elephant really looks like; and so their pictures become steadily more unrecognizable, until the sequence culminates in something distantly like a cat with a long unfeline nose. There is such a beast carved on a bench-end in Chester Cathedral – a splendid piece of mediaeval wood-carving; but an elephant it surely isn't!

So may I take this opportunity of making my views so crystal-clear that no possibility of misunderstanding can ensue. So here goes:

As matters stand now, I have no wish to give up the Editorship of our Journal, or any of the other work that I am currently doing for the Parson Woodforde Society. In the past I have managed to combine this with a full-time lecturing job, GCE examining, and many other ways of turning an honest penny. Now, in retirement, I find I can give very much more time to the work of the Society and treat it as a leisure task.

I have always been aware of the potential dangers in entrusting the responsibilities of such a post to an elderly person, who might at any time, without warning, be incapacitated. But I guard against this as well as I can by being always well ahead of the game. By the time an issue reaches the membership, there is another in hand, and sometimes two more. When this issue appears, the autumn Journal will have been completely made up, apart from the purely topical parts that must be added just before publication, and much of the material for the winter number collected.

But the final arbiter must be yourselves, the subscribing members. Inevitably a change of editor will entail a different kind of Journal. It would of course be most improper for me to offer any speculation on the ways in which it might go. All I wish to say is that if over the years I have worn out my welcome, and a representative body of members is of the opinion that it would do better without my presence, no hard labour will be necessary to persuade me. As it says in the little epilogue to Ben Jonson's *Volpone*: He doesn't think he has done anything to offend the audience, but

If there be, censure him: here he doubtful stands.
If not, fare jovially, and clap your hands.

– R. L. WINSTANLEY
Editor

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

It is with some trepidation that I construct this, my first contribution to the Journal as your Chairman. Readers of the last journal will have seen the note from George Bunting, signalling his retirement from this position.

George has for over two decades served the Society as Treasurer and led it as Chairman. His contribution has been immeasurable and I know you will join with me in thanking him for the wise stewardship which has led to such an active and healthy Society. We hope there will be many more opportunities for us to take tea with him and Mabs at Priddles Hill House on future Somerset Frolics, and to enjoy the pleasure of their company in their beautiful home.

For those who are unfamiliar with the Society's constitution, members elect the committee at the AGM and the committee in turn elects the Chairman and other officers. Your committee has therefore changed, filling vacant posts and distributing tasks so as to lessen the burden on any one individual. Although a list of the committee always appears towards the end of the journal, I thought a little more detail about the people, posts and work would not go amiss. Volunteers are always appreciated to provide back up for the committee, and if you feel you can contribute, please contact the person concerned.

Chairman: Nigel Custance; Vice-Chairman: Martin Brayne; Editor: Roy Winstanley, responsible not only for the Journal but also for our major publications; Treasurer: David Case; Membership Secretary: Phyllis Stanley, who also manages the Newsletter; Mollie Matthews and Suzanne Custance continue to serve on the committee, with considerable involvement in our Frolics.

We welcome three new committee members: JoAnn Archer, who will continue to maintain the list of members, but in an expanded form; Ken Baddley, who has kindly offered to help us get to grips with computer technology in order to enhance our efficiency and effectiveness; and Ann Williams, who will produce minutes of committee and other meetings far more accurately than I could ever hope to do myself.

The whole committee looks forward to serving the members to the best of its ability and to maintaining the tradition of the Society.

– NIGEL D. E. CUSTANCE
Chairman

RECORDS OF THE COLLINS FAMILY, OF ANSFORD AND CARY

Parson Woodforde was, of course, perfectly justified in calling himself a Somerset man, but this entitlement came not from the Woodfordes, whose association with the county was only two generations old in his time, (his brother Heighes was actually the first Woodforde in the family to be born there), but from his mother's kin, the Collins family. They first appear as residents at Ansford in the first half of the seventeenth century. The only notice we have of the first James Collins is that of his death in 1648, inscribed in the parish register; but his wife, Lettice, called "d. of Nicholas Boway of Ansford and Edith his wife", was born in 1599, married in 1617 and died in 1632. Among their six children the eldest son, another James Collins, was born in 1618 and died 1669. His wife, and long-term widow, née Dorothy Watts, must either have been much younger than her husband or else had a very long life, for she survived until 1714. The eldest male in the next generation was Nicholas Collins. He lived from 1651 to 1723 and was married to "Joane Russe". Russ was a familiar Cary name in the Parson's time. These great-grandparents of his were married there by licence on 5 September 1678. He is described as "Clothier": she as spinster of Castle Cary, aged 23. Outliving her husband, she died in 1737.

Their second son was James Collins, the diarist's maternal grandfather, who was baptized on 25/10/1683. In addition to three sisters, who will not concern our narrative, he had five brothers: Nicholas, 29/3/1681, born and died in the same year; William, 11/7/1684, who also may have died in infancy: Daniel, 20/1/1687-8: "Ffranke", 2/9/1691, noted in this way and not as Francis: and John, 24/12/1695. James Collins married Jane Tilley. Little or nothing is known of her antecedents, but Woodforde's brother Heighes was apprenticed to an attorney, Mr John Tilley, "of the Poultry, London", apparently a lawyer of some importance since the premium was 150 guineas, who was very likely to have been a relation. The only surviving child of James Collins and Jane Tilley was a daughter, also Jane, who was born in 1706. When she was fourteen her mother died (bur. 6 May 1720). Four years later this Jane married the Rev. Samuel Woodforde and went to live in Ansford Parsonage. Then, a year after that, her father married Hester Chapman, and had a second daughter. Dr R. E. H. Woodforde's *Family Book* twice goes wrong here. He calls the child "Margaret", while she was really Martha, and in one of his

Family Trees she is shown erroneously as the daughter of Jane Tilley and the full sister of the diarist's mother, instead of half-sister, which is correct.

Among the Woodforde papers still in the possession of the family, there is a notebook kept by Frank Collins, relating to the estate and possessions of James and Hester compiled after his brother's death which is mentioned in it.

The entries begin with part of a Will, introduced by a preamble:

James Collins of Ansford in County of Somerset the 14th March, 1726/7, made his last will in writing after having Devised his land, etc. to his wife to be sold for paym^t. of Debt, etc. Amongst other Clauses and provisoes are the words following:
I do farther Order and require my said wife so soon as the former Articles are compleated to give a just & true Account unto my two Brothers Frank & John Collins what the Remainder is for the Use of my Child or Children* which two Brothers I do Nominate & appoint Guardians & Trustees of this my will And do fully empower them to Act in every respect as I have gave my wife herein, should she dye before Completed.
And by the same will made his wife Hester his Executrix.
The said James Collins dyed 28th Sept. 1727

His debts were as follows

To Mr. Samuel Woodford his wifes portion	1200	0	0
To Frank & John Collins upon Mortgage	325	0	0
To Mr. Bennetts Exec ^{ers} . upon Bond	55	0	0
To Mr Vigour Apothecary for physick	28	15	4
To John Gibbs upon Note of Hand	21	0	0
Wm. Clothier do.	10	15	0
Alice Gibbs Do.	5	0	0
Mary or Anne Arnum Do.	22	0	0
to Richard Wallis Do.	9	18	0
To James Lumber for Wages	6	0	0
To Mr. Ruddock for Rent	7	0	0
Funerall Expences	10	0	0
Total	£ 1700	8	4
The Inventory of the personall Estate	160	10	6
Remains to be raised	£ 1539	17	10

*The phrase "Child or Children" refers to the younger daughter and any subsequent issue who might be born after the Will was drawn up. Jane, dowered and safely married to Samuel Woodforde, was no longer her father's responsibility.

The heavy excess of debts over assets could be met only by an extensive sale of land and other property. A further page in the notebook shows how it was cleared off:

Rever ^d . Potter purchased of the s ^d . Exec ^{ers}.	)	£	s	d
Closes called Byworthy & Broad Close)			
For to be p ^d . Mr Woodford	)	520	0	0
Nicholas Watts in trust for Frank Collins)			
purchased Dwelling house, Outhousing, Gardens,)			
orchard, Home Close, Pond Close, Drewets)			
Worthy West feild, Little and Little feilds at)			
Watts Close pump Furnice cyder Mill & wring)			
for	)	960	0	0
£680 to be p ^d . in full of £1200				
£280 to Frank & John Collins in p ^t . of their				
mortgage)			
John Hockey in trust for Hester Collins)			
purchased Little House, Garden, orchard barn)			
Stable & Pigstys, for	)	59	17	10
£45 0 0 to be p ^d . in full of the Mortgage				
£14 17 10 to Hester Collins towards paym ^t . of				
the debts, etc.				
		<hr/>		
		£1539	17	10

This all sounds fearsomely complicated, and we should not be telling the truth if we said that we understood it in every detail; but it is clear enough in its general trend. Unless she had assets coming in from another source or sources, of which we know nothing, Hester Collins was left by her husband in straitened circumstances, possessed of little enough by comparison with the nominal value of the real property in James Collins' lifetime. This is confirmed by an entry on another page in the notebook:

The Acco ^t . of the said Hester Collins to Frank & John pursuant to the same Will	
First as D ^{er} . and haveing Rece ^d . her said husbands personall Estate Appraised at ...	£160 10 6
D ^{er} . to the Money Ariseing by Sale of parts of his Reall Estate	£1539 17 10

As to the profitts of the Reall Estate from the 28th Sept. 1727 to 25th March, 1728 when it was sold she declared after Serv^{ts}. Wages, Taxes & Repairs was paid, her self & Child

being sick this winter half year, the Estate
in hand and being stocked with a Dairy of Cows it
Amounted to Nothing.

The last part of this declaration reads like a veritable *cri de coeur*, and reveals that Hester's inheritance from her late husband had been almost completely wiped out by the various costs and expenses. One wonders at this how she and her child managed to survive, and whether Samuel Woodforde and his wife helped out.

Frank Collins died in 1737, the Ansford register recording his burial on 20 August of that year. It does not appear that either he or his brother John was married – at least, no likely name appears in the registers, and there are no relevant names of children. Just on a year later his widowed sister-in-law died ("M^{rs}. Esther Collins — August 2"). Her daughter Martha was now 12 years old. It would seem probable that her half-sister, Woodforde's mother, completed her upbringing, especially so in view of her eventual marriage to Richard Clarke, from Epsom, Surrey, where Samuel Woodforde's parents had been domiciled. There is little doubt that Clarke was a Woodforde protégé.

On 3 July 1740, our own James was baptised in Ansford church: "being very ill," his father wrote in the *Family Book*. His godparents were John Collins, Uncle Tom who was not present and represented by a proxy, and a Mrs Joan Randolph. Between three and four years later John Collins died, leaving to his godson the little estate at Sandford Orcas and a ring which his mother kept for him and handed over on his 22nd birthday. About this time Martha Collins was married to Richard Clarke, and became the mother of James (1745) and Richard (1746), those cousins of the Parson whom the diary has rendered so well-known. But many of the people in the Collins family had short lives, and Martha's was one of the most brief. She died in 1751 ("M^{rs}. Martha Clarke Aug 13"). In the previous year a Hester Clarke who was almost certainly her infant daughter had died also. Then three years afterwards, Richard Clarke married as his second wife the Parson's sister Clementina Sobieski.

Daniel Collins was the remaining brother of Parson Woodforde's grandfather. It seems odd that he was not mentioned in the family documents drawn up by his brother Frank, and already quoted. Yet we have long known that he did survive to manhood, because the Woodforde family still have portraits of him, both as a boy and as

a man. Fortunately, quite a lot of information has recently been discovered about Daniel from the Public Record Office at Chancery Lane, London, and this reveals a fascinating story which makes him the most interesting of all the Collins brothers.

Daniel Collins was married to Magdalen Christien,* daughter of Abraham Christien, a druggist residing in the London parish of Covent Garden. Daniel himself evidently lived in the capital for some years, before returning to Somerset in 1731. Over twenty years later, early in 1752, he made his Will, so intriguing a document that most of it is cited verbatim below:

The last will and testament of Daniel Collins Gentleman of Castle Cary in the County of Somerset whereas calling to mind a vile scheme levelled against me in the year of our Lord 1744 concerning the marriage of my wife's brother Abraham Christien lately deceased which seemed calculated purely to extort money from me and as there is now a new scheme by the same set of people as appears by a bill filed against me in the Exchequer which I hope that honourable court of Equity will soon determine for which reason I therefore make this my last will and testament...

I bequeath all my lands tenements estates and all my money chattels and effects of what kind and nature of which I am possessed unto my loving wife Magdalen ... desiring and recommending her to reward those our friends in her last will and testament who have been most serviceable to us both.

The Will goes on to appoint Magdalen as the sole executrix and it was signed and dated 2 February 1752 and witnessed by "William Melior", James Biss and Giles Francis. The involvement as a witness of such an influential man as Woodforde's "M^r. Melliar" denotes that Daniel was a man of some substance. The Will was proved on 17 May 1753. Daniel died a little earlier, only about a year after he wrote the above-cited statement, when he was likely to have been already ill and knew that he had not long to live.

As Daniel's Will had referred so bitterly to some dispute concerning his wife's brother, the next step was to try to find out the details of this very intriguing case, especially as it was considered important enough to be tried in one of the major courts of the land.

* Heretofore referred to mistakenly as "Christyson", from an error in the Woodforde *Family Book*.

The search was similar to that reported in the Summer 1994 Journal about Mr Hindley and George Grenville, and many hours were spent in the Public Records Office. Fortunately, the initial reference to the case was found fairly easily because the name of the plaintiff was given as Christien. The suit appeared in the Michaelmas session of 1752, some nine months after Daniel Collins had written his Will.

The next step was to find the individual pleadings. In civil cases in the eighteenth century the judgement of the court relied almost completely upon the examination of the written pleadings of the plaintiff and defendant who did not speak during the hearing. The plaintiff submitted a bill of complaint against the defendant who replied to the bill with a written submission of his answer. The court might then commission certain persons to examine witnesses, before meeting to consider its judgement. The original pleadings are held in the store of the PRO and comprise several pages of very long sheets of parchment. As they are quite lengthy, only a précis appears here.

The plaintiff, or "oratrix", was Anna Maria Christien, the one surviving child of Magdalen's brother Abraham who had died around 1739. There was another brother, Peter, who had also died at about that date. Because Anna was still under the age of twenty-one (she was about nineteen) she was represented by her "next friend", one Matthew Gall who was also her guardian. Anna had had a younger brother, Peter, but he died when he was about six years of age.

The plaintiff stated that the father of Abraham, Peter and Magdalen was Abraham senior the London chemist. he had died in 1729 and it was alleged that he left a considerable personal estate, mainly invested in South Sea stock, on trust for Abraham junior. He was to receive the interest in his lifetime, and then the stock was to pass absolutely to the "lawful children of Abraham junr. when they reach majority". But if there were no issue, the stock was to be divided equally between the three children. When brother Peter died in 1739 he left no Will but had a substantial personal estate, estimated as worth some £5000, and as Abraham had died, Magdalen Collins had obtained Letters of Administration as the nearest relative.

Matthew Gall then stated that he had applied to Daniel Collins for payment of the interest on the stock, for an account of the remaining capital left by Abraham senior, and for an account of the estate left

by Peter. Gall then alleged that Daniel refused the request, “pretending” that the remaining stock of Abraham senior had dwindled to a small amount because of the need to pay outstanding debts; and he “pretended” that Anna Maria was not entitled to Peter’s estate and that even if she was, it was very inconsiderable and sufficient only to pay his debts. Finally, Daniel, Magdalen and other confederates were charged with concealing the true amounts involved.

The Defendant’s Response was taken at Ansford and dated 21 February 1752, nineteen days after Daniel had written out his Will.

The values of the entitlement at issue were listed. The South Sea stock left by Abraham senior was itemised, amounting to about £500, and a similar amount was specified, representing one third of the personal estate left by Peter, to which Anna Maria would be entitled if she had a valid claim. The share of Peter’s estate was of one third because, apart from Anna and Magdalen, there was also Magdalen’s sister who had not been mentioned by the plaintiff. This sister was named as Modesto Francis Matherbe, a widow. Daniel then stated that he would hand over these stated amounts if it was proven that Anna Maria was the lawful child of Abraham.

The defendant then gave his main defence, claiming that he had been credibly informed that Anna Maria was not a lawful child of Abraham because she was born before the marriage of her parents and, further, that they were never married.

While acknowledging his responsibilities as a Joint Executor, with Peter, of Abraham senior’s Will, Daniel gave what appear to be excuses for laxity in his duties as an Executor. He stated that his poor health had inhibited his control of the funds and said that he had acted jointly with Peter until the end of 1731, when he had to leave London and return to Somerset for his health. He also stated that he had received a letter from Abraham regarding “the wicked woman who had swore her bastard to him and who had gone to the Parish nurse to lie in and that he expected the Parish officers to charge him about 50 shillings as the alleged father”. Daniel Collins stated that he also had had a letter from Peter giving an account of the death of “the woman”, and Peter assured him that he had found no probability of their marriage.

Having gone so far as to deny the legitimacy of the children, Daniel then surprisingly revealed that he did know something about their upbringing. He stated that the two children were moved from

Covent Garden parish to the neighbouring parish of St Mary-le-Strand, which maintained them until 1743 when the parish officers stated that they intended to put Anna Maria out to service. She would then have been about ten years old.

Daniel and Magdalen lost the case because the Judges said they were satisfied with the “several proofs submitted by the plaintiff”, which must have supported the legitimacy of Anna Maria. The first decree was made by the Court on 16 December 1752 with an order to account for the stock and money due to the plaintiff. The final hearing was on 28 February 1754 but, by this time, Daniel Collins had died and so Magdalen became the defendant. Anna Maria had also reached her majority as she became twenty-one on 9 October 1753. The court ordered that the money and assets be given to Anna Maria and these were accounted at about £1500. From this money, Gall was to be repaid £40 for the cost of placing Anna Maria as an apprentice from 9 March 1743 for seven years and eight months, and a further £165 for her maintenance and education from 1743 until her majority. While Magdalen had to pay out this large sum, she was well able to afford it, as the relevant assets had been kept intact. Further, Magdalen also had £600 worth of stock left by her father and a similar amount from her brother Peter. Her husband Daniel must also have left her a considerable estate, as she was still able to leave over £2000 when she died.

For young Anna Maria it must have been a happy and well deserved conclusion, especially considering the early hardships that she suffered in parish workhouses until she was ten years old. At that time, conditions in the London workhouses were deplorable and the majority of children died in them. The money which Anna gained from the law suit must have seemed a great fortune to a poor young girl. It was worth well over £75000 today and would have allowed Anna to live in some comfort for many years.

The court made no award for costs, although Mr Gall was allowed to take his costs out of Anna’s inheritance. It seems, therefore, that the court did not feel that Collins was wholly to blame and perhaps the court case could have been avoided if Gall had shown evidence of Anna’s legitimacy to Daniel Collins. But, on the other hand, such a reasonable approach is not reflected in Daniel’s words in his own Will which, as we have seen, refers to a “vile scheme ... to extort money”. It also emerged from the judgement that Daniel claimed a deduction of £60 for paying for the “washing, lodging, wearing apparel and other necessaries for Anna Maria”. If, as assumed, this

was before Gall became her guardian, it makes one even more sceptical about Daniel's attitude.

Although the record of the younger Abraham's marriage has not been found, this is perhaps not too surprising, given the laxity of marriage procedures at this time, before the introduction of the new Marriage Laws in 1753. However, it was possible to find the baptismal records of both Anna Maria and her brother Peter at St Martin-in-the-Fields, viz:

12/10/1732. Anna Maria daughter of Abraham Christien and Anne.

[This was only a few days after her date of birth]

3/8/1736 Peter son of Abraham Christien and Anne

These records confirm the legitimacy of both children, and cast some doubt on Daniel's report about an alleged "bastard" in the letter from Abraham. Such a letter seems to make sense only if Abraham was referring to another child, possibly a third child after the birth of Anna and Peter, when Abraham may have separated from his wife. It is also surprising that Daniel was not aware of Abraham's wife, because the baptismal records cited above suggest that Abraham and Anne lived together for the few years covering the birth of the two children. Then followed the traumatic period when, presumably, the parents separated and the children had to be placed in the parish workhouse. At that time the mother, Anne, either abandoned the children or, being destitute, had no option but to throw herself and the children on the mercy of the parish. In any event, as reported by brother Peter, Anne died within the next few years.

It seems, therefore, that Daniel and Magdalen distanced themselves from Abraham after moving back to Somerset in 1731. Abraham was obviously far less prosperous than Daniel. He may also have been the black sheep of the family as he was not trusted to receive an unencumbered legacy from his father, as were his brother and sisters. Abraham probably died in poor straits. He left no Will and there are no recorded Letters of Administration.

*

Daniel Collins died at Castle Cary in 1753, the longest lived of the brothers. The widow, who as we have seen was certainly not short of money, provided Cary Church with his monument, which reads:

Near this place lie the remains of Daniel Collins, Gent. who died the 13th of April 1753, in the 60th year of his age.* Early in life he retired from business to this, his native air, to obtain health, which neither his own experience nor skill of the faculty could procure him in London. He passed the remainder of his days inoffensive, friendly, honest, always seeking the peace of a just mind, by an humble resignation to the Divine will, and constant integrity and benevolence to his neighbour. His disconsolate widow, Magdalen Collins, has placed this monument as a mark of her sincere regard to his memory, with whom she had the happiness to live upwards of forty years, in the greatest concord and affection.

It is clear that Daniel had gone to London very young, perhaps as an apprentice, and married as soon as he was "out of his time". Magdalen followed her late husband's injunction to the letter, carrying out the instructions to reward the loyal friend who was standing by them, an obvious reference to the lawsuit which was not decided until after Daniel's death. It is all the more interesting to us that this friend was none other than Cary Creed, Woodforde's "Justice Creed" or "Squire Creed", a man very well known through his many appearances in the diary.

The Will of Magdalen Collins was written soon after Daniel died, and is dated 18 September 1753. This is some thirteen years before the death of Magdalen herself.

It begins with some minor bequests. Her servant Mary King was given £50, a small silver tumbler, one silver spoon marked "Dr. Dolby", and a bed and four cane chairs. She also left some property to Robert Francis, one of her tenants at Ansford; this was identified as the "little tenement or cottage house and little garden plot in Ansford which is now let to him". The main bequest then follows and this states: "to Cary Creed the younger of Bedford Street in the parish of Saint Paul Covent Garden all the rest and residue of my messuages lands tenements and my personal estate". The beneficiary is named as "The younger" to distinguish him from his father of the same name, the "old M^r. Creed" of the diary who, born in 1688, was a near contemporary of Daniel Collins. Creed junior was also appointed sole Executor, and the Will was witnessed by William Pears and Jos. Francis. This document is particularly

*William Phelps: *Hist. Som.* I, 386. It will be noted that the given age of Daniel is a long way from agreeing with the entry of his baptism in the Castle Cary register, which would make him over 65 at the time he died.

interesting in that it confirms the speculation first made in the Summer 1994 article about Mr Hindley; namely, that Creed had been living and working in London as a junior colleague of Mr Hindley in the Exchequer. Creed was therefore well placed to help the Collins in progressing their law suit in London.

The exact relationship of Magdalen Collins to Parson Woodforde was that she was his great-aunt by marriage. Actually "Aunt Collins" as he calls her, is not mentioned in the diary during her lifetime. In 1766, nearly thirteen years after the events just described, he wrote:

May - 19 -

Poor Aunt Collins departed this life this morning at M^r. Creeds
I hope she is eternally happy now at rest -

May - 21 -

Parson Penny called upon me this morning at the lower
House and desired leave to bury M^{rs}. Collins next Friday -
in C. Cary Church, it being her desire for him to bury her ...
Poor Aunt Collins has left every thing she was worth to
Young Justice Creed, & no Relation to her, she died worth
as it is related above two thousand Pounds -

May - 23 -

Poor Aunt Collins was buried in C. Cary Church this
Evening by M^r. Penny - I attended her Funeral being
invited by M^r. Creed in the Capacity of a Clergyman
to walk before the Corpse with Parson Penny -
The Pawl-Bearers were Old M^r. Creed & M^r. Melliar D^r.
Clarke and Uncle Tom, M^r. White & M^r. Pew - Justice
Creed was her only Mourner - we had
all Silk Hatbands & Shammy Gloves - M^r. Francis Undertaker

The second and third entries are of interest because of the way they illustrate the protocol of the time. Penny was the former curate of Castle Cary and a longstanding friend of the family, but he no longer had any official connection with the parish and had to ask permission of Woodforde to conduct the funeral. The presence at the ceremony of the Woodforde relations and other important men of the town also denotes the respect shown to a person of some substance and a property owner. The undertaker's Christian name was Joseph and it was almost certainly he who had signed as a witness of Magdalen's Will thirteen years before.

The second diary entry is also intriguing as it indicates the degree of Parson Woodforde's annoyance that the bulk of this considerable fortune, over £2000, had been left outside the family. In addition, it shows that the amicable relationship between Magdalen and the Creeds was very close. As she died at the Creeds' house in South Cary, it is likely that she had been living there and that they had been caring for her for some time. All the same it is puzzling that she should have made the bequest to the entire exclusion of the Woodfordes, since she had been on friendly terms with them too, standing as godmother to Sister Jane in 1734 and Brother John in 1744.

Some three years after Magdalen died, her Will was again mentioned in the diary. The indiscreet Heighes, probably out of pique because he had been Justice Creed's clerk from which post he was unceremoniously sacked, somehow obtained a copy of her Will and "published" it. As Woodforde wrote ruefully, "The Justice is very angry with our Family". The dissension was compounded by another dispute which was going on at the same time, Creed having autocratically forced his servant into the Singers' gallery at Cary Church, an action that was so resented by the townsfolk that it sparked off the great Cary quarrel. The Justice wanted support, and thought to get it from his young friend, to whom he had shown so much favour and patronage. Woodforde, however, sensing that this was a most unpopular cause, refused to get embroiled in it. Creed, irritated, began to hint darkly about appropriating the tiny estate at Sandford Orcas, bequeathed to the diarist by John Collins, Daniel's brother. Peace was restored at last, but it is too much to say that Woodforde and Creed were ever on terms of such close friendship as they had been in the past. All the same, when the Justice was in a good mood, he apparently told Woodforde several times that at his death he would leave the Collins bequest back to the curate or his family. This explains why, after Creed had died unexpectedly at the Bristol Hot Well in January 1775, Woodforde was so interested in the search for his missing Will, which no-one could find, not even the Justice's former "sweetheart", Mrs Betty Baker. When it was at last located, the disappointing news was that the late Justice had left everything he possessed to his father. Woodforde may have continued for a few weeks to cling with less and less conviction to the vanishing prospect that the father would make good what the son had failed to do. But on 14 March 1775, writing on the blotting paper to which he usually relegated his

afterthoughts, he jotted down with good-humoured resignation:

... had a Letter this Evening from Brother
Heighes to let me know that M^r. Creed
had made his Will, and that he left me
£-000 – alias nothing at all –

*

Three months before the funeral of Mrs Collins at Castle Cary, Woodforde's mother had died at Ansford Parsonage, aged nearly sixty. He had undoubtedly a great affection for his parents, in spite of the fact that in his boyhood he could not have seen a great deal of them, having been at various boarding schools from the age of seven. Nearly 30 years after his mother died, when he was fifty-four, the death of the mother of a clerical friend moved him to write: "the loss of my dear Parents I feel to this Moment, and can never forget it during Life". (M.S. Diary, 15/9/1794). But from the diary reader's point of view, she very seldom "comes alive", and is never presented so vividly as his father. She seems to have been a simple, unassuming woman whose quiet life was mostly spent in the small village where she was born, all her vital statistics being contained within a few pages of the same register book. In the diary she mostly appears associated with very mundane things; her son buys various items, mainly concerned with cookery and home medicine, and she in her turn pays for them. Neither parent ever turned up at Winchester during the Elections, to see how he was faring, although Uncle Tom did this for each year his son spent there; nor, unlike Warden Oglander's sisters, did they visit him at New College.

Jane Woodforde had a long final illness, which appears to have been a form of breast cancer: the diarist also mentions a sudden paralyzing lameness which may have been caused by a metastasis of the same disease. Woodforde reacted to this in the way he always did to the terminal illnesses of those close to him. He first tried to convince himself that the patient was recovering, seizing on the most transitory and delusive signs of improvement. He recounted a journey she made with her husband to consult a London doctor, and was for a time full of optimism as to the outcome. Then he came gradually to realize that the case was hopeless. This was the first death in the family that really touched him deeply. The day before his mother died, he wrote:

Poor Mama sent for me and Jack this Afternoon up into her Room and very solemnly took her Leave of us: therefore I do not believe she can exist very long in this World –

This is the full text of the entry for 8 February 1766:

It pleased Almighty God of his great goodness to take unto himself my Dear good Mother this morning about 9. o'clock out of this sinful World, and to deliver her out of her miseries – She went out of this World as easy as it was possible for any one. I hope she is now eternally happy in everlasting glory
I breakfasted, dined, supped and spent the Evening at Parsonage.
O Lord God Almighty, send help from thy Holy Place to my Dear Father, and to all my Dear Mother's relatives, to withstand so great a Shock, and to live, and dye so easy as she did –
I laid at the Lower House again, as did my Brother John –

Woodforde, deeply distressed, took a little time off from his clerical duties. A stranger, "one Parson Cooke of Exeter", offered to take the next Sunday service at Ansford, while Cooke's nephew, the newly appointed incumbent of Hornblotton, conducted a funeral for him the next day. By 11 February the diarist was back at work, when he christened the latest child of Mr Tidcomb the schoolmaster. The funeral took place on the day after this. The diarist's account of the ceremony reads like a roll-call of the most prominent among the townsfolk. Like many village notabilities, Woodforde's mother was buried inside the church, beneath the chancel, rather than outside in the churchyard where so many of her relations lie. There is an odd reminiscence of this when, five years later, his father died and the vault was reopened. Describing the funeral the diarist says that he was buried "by the side of his dear wife, whose Coffin is quite entire, tho' dark & gloomy, the breast plate quite plain – ". Above the place stands the memorial which James Woodforde put up to the memory of his parents. The large altar-tomb that is on the right as one approaches the south door of the church from the churchyard is said to have been erected by the Collins family, but we do not know of any documentary verification of this.

BRITISH DIARISTS OF THE EIGHTEENTH AND
NINETEENTH CENTURIES – No. XXV: A DIARY OF
CHARLES DICKENS, 1838

*The Letters of Charles Dickens. Volume One, 1820-1839 Appendix
A. Dickens' Diary. (The Pilgrim Edition, The Clarendon Press,
Oxford, 1965)*

Of course, Dickens was not one of the great diarists. If long-term application to the disciplines of the genre is to be the criterion, he can hardly be accepted as a diarist at all. This is by no means surprising, when one realises how much *writing* he accomplished in the course of his working life – the novels, his major part in the running of the periodicals, *Household Words* and its successor *All the Year Round*, the administration of his theatrical ventures and charitable work, and the 10 to 12 private letters which, on an average, he wrote every day. The diaries he kept in his later years were strictly of the memorandum-book kind, in which he set down his appointments and a record of daily activities in the tersest possible manner, almost in a form of shorthand. As he was accustomed to destroy each of these as the year in which it had been kept came to its end, we should not have known anything about them, if he had not lost the booklet for 1867 in New York. This lone survivor has assumed a quite immense importance in Dickensian biography. "Scholars have been squeezing it like a tiny sponge for every drop of information it can yield"* about Dickens' liaison with Ellen Lawless Ternan. But a diary, in any real sense of that word, it certainly is not.

The example I have chosen, and one that I hope will constitute Dickens' passport for admission to our series, comes from a much earlier part of his life, and at least began as an attempt to write an authentic diary fully descriptive of his life and feelings at the time he was engaged on it. Actually he kept up some sort of a record for four years (1838-41) using four successive annual volumes of a m.s. book, *The Law and Commercial Daily Remembrancer*, which allowed a page to each day. But here I run at once into trouble when I confess, as I must, that the most important part lies in the first fortnight. Afterwards, although it still contains diary material, it is increasingly given up to a record of engagements, memoranda and, just as in Woodforde, lists of expenses. And when I further compound my offence by acknowledging that the preliminary,

* Claire Tomalin: *The Invisible Woman. The Story of Dickens and Nelly Ternan.*

expository narrative necessary to introduce the entries will be considerably longer than the sum of the entries themselves, my readers may well feel like rejecting this latest addition to the series, paraphrasing Bernard Levin with “Woodforde, yes – Dickens, no!”, and giving it a quick thumbs down.

And yet – and yet – Although few in number these entries are so interesting, they reveal with such clarity an intense grief which followed a time of golden happiness, that I sincerely hope they will find favour in the eyes of discerning readers.

At the beginning of 1838, when he started to write the diary, Charles Dickens was not far from his 26th birthday (born 7 February 1812). He had been famous, a best-selling novelist, since the first few numbers of *Pickwick*, nearly two years before. He had married in the same year, and his eldest child, later to be known as “Charles Dickens the Younger” was born on 6 January 1837.

Dickens had to some degree married on the rebound. He had been desperately in love with Maria Beadnell, daughter of a banker, whose family lived, appropriately enough, in Lombard Street. He held a fairly ambiguous social position with the Beadnells who, while willing enough to be entertained by such a bright young man (note his poem *The Bill of Fare*, written to be recited by him at the dinner table, with its shameless yet uneasy flattery of the host and his kin) but were most certainly not about to accept him as one of their family by allowing a match with Maria. Even if they did not know that his father had been in a debtors’ prison, he was all too plainly a youth without much to his name in the way of prospects. Even if there had been no parental opposition, it is extremely unlikely that Maria would ever have married him. She was a flirt, and enjoyed having men dangling after her, while remaining uncommitted. There is no sign that the anguished letters he wrote to her when he felt her slipping away from him met with any response at all. Hence his anxiety to prove to the world that he could support a family, and his marriage soon after the first success of *Pickwick*. George Hogarth, a friend and advisor of Sir Walter Scott, was a former Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh who deserted the law for journalism and settled in London. He and Dickens met when they were both on the staff of a newspaper called the *Morning Chronicle*. Catherine Thomson Hogarth (George Thomson, her maternal grandfather, is remembered as the publisher of many of Burns’ songs), born in 1815, was the eldest of the Hogarths’ ten children.

No doubt Dickens considered himself happily married in the first years of their union, although there is no trace, in his relations with her, of the rapturous devotion he had felt when in love with Maria. Indeed, one finds in letters to his male friends the occasional patronising comment about his wife, and in the correspondence they exchanged before the marriage, they appear sometimes to be at cross-purposes, she complaining that she did not see enough of him and he replying firmly that with him his work and the obligations of his profession must always come first.

The next sister in age to Catherine was Mary Scott Hogarth, four years her junior. She was not a bridesmaid at Catherine's wedding; nor did she accompany the bridal pair on their honeymoon, although this was common enough at the time, and some commentators on Dickens have mistakenly placed her in both situations. Nor did she live permanently with the couple, but stayed with them, off and on, for quite considerable periods. Dickens was undoubtedly very attached to her. She was very young, a virgin and his wife's sister, whom he could treat as a sister of his own. Dickens indeed had an extraordinary fascination, perceptible in many of his books, with the brother-sister relationship. Mary filled the role of beloved sister admirably. Some of the biographers have seen her as a feather-brained teen-age "bobby-soxer", infatuated with Dickens. Two letters of hers are still extant. One, written on 15 May 1836* to her cousin and namesake, another Mary Scott Hogarth, altogether refutes this view of her. It reveals a warm affection for Dickens, but no sign of hero-worship; the tone is rather of friendly appraisal:

I have just returned from spending a most delightfully happy month with dearest Catherine in her own house! I only wish you could see her in it, and sincerely hope you may some day or other, not far distant, she makes a most capital housekeeper and is as happy as the day is long – I think they are more devoted than ever since their Marriage if that be possible – I am sure you would be delighted with him if you knew him he is such a nice Creature and so clever he is courted and made up to by all the literary Gentleman [sic], and has more to do in that way than he can well manage.

Dickens had been living before his marriage at No. 15 Furnival's Inn, Holborn, and continued to reside there. It was a building of

* *Letters of Charles Dickens, op. cit., Appendix E, 689-691.*

lawyers' chambers. Mary's letter says that "it is not exactly a house but a set of rooms opening from one to another". It was demolished in 1900 to make way for the Head Office of the Prudential Assurance Co., and in my youth I used to call this edifice the ugliest building in London; but the monstrosities erected since that time may well have demoted it from that honourable position. In April 1837 Dickens moved from there to No. 48 Doughty Street,* off Mecklenburgh Square in Bloomsbury, the present official Dickens museum. But Mary's young life was nearly over. On 6 May, a Saturday, Dickens, Catherine, Mary and possibly his parents went together to the St James' theatre. On the bill was *Is She his Wife?*, a one-act comic burletta written by Dickens. Returning from the theatre, they must have sat around talking for some time, since it was one in the morning before they went to bed. Almost as soon as she had gone to her room, before she had time to undress, Mary was taken terribly ill. In spite of everything that could be done for her, she died about three in the afternoon of the same day, in Dickens' arms.

He was devastated by the blow: "I have lost the best friend I ever had. Words cannot describe the pride I felt in her, and the devoted attachment I bore her". And in another letter: "I solemnly believe that so perfect a creature never breathed. I knew her inmost heart, and her real worth and value. She had not a fault". A measure of his grief may be seen by his being quite unable to work; even the paramount obligation of his life, the duty to his readers, was set aside. The June instalment of *Pickwick*, now nearing its end, and the current chapters of *Oliver Twist* in Bentley's Miscellany, of which Dickens was editor, failed to appear, and a notice was inserted in the latter:

Since the appearance of the last Number of this work the Editor has had to mourn the sudden death of a very dear young relative to whom he was most affectionately attached, and whose society had been, for a long time, the chief solace of his labours. He has been compelled to seek a short interval of rest and quiet.

Grief caused Catherine to suffer a miscarriage, but she soon became pregnant again. Her daughter Mary, named of course after Mary Hogarth, was born on 6 March 1838.

* In 1922 Vera Brittain and Winifred Holtby, young women just down from Oxford and trying to break into the literary and journalistic worlds, lodged at No. 52. There is an interesting letter by Holtby, dated 1/1/1922, describing the street and neighbourhood; but at that time the Victorians were in the trough of the wave, and neither has a word to say about the Inimitable.

Dickens, who throughout life took a managerial part in everything surrounding him, organized the funeral and her burial in the then recently opened cemetery at Kensal Green. He wrote in a letter printed in the Pilgrim edition as "to an unknown correspondent" a passage which sounds remarkably like one of the more emotional outpourings in his novels:

Her body lies in the beautiful cemetery in the Harrow Road. I saw the grave but a few days ago, and the grass around it was as green and the flowers as bright, as if nothing in the earth in which they grew could ever wither or fade. Beneath my feet there lay a silent but solemn witness that all health and beauty are but things of the hour.

In *Our Mutual Friend* Mr Wegg calls Mr Boffin "The Minion of Fortune and Worm of the Hour", but that was written in another mood altogether, many years later.

The inscription he composed for the headstone is well-known: "Mary Scott Hogarth/Died 7th May 1837/Young Beautiful and Good/God In His Mercy/Numbered Her With His Angels/At The Early Age of/Seventeen". A recent article in *Trollopiana*, the Journal of the Trollope Society, points out the neglected state of this cemetery today, and the overgrown and vanished grave. Something, one might think, for the Dickens Fellowship to attend to.

And this brings us at last to the diary. As the year 1838 opened, Dickens was still grieving. It would seem that it owed its inception, rather than to any of the reasons usually attributed to those who begin to keep a diary, simply to his wanting to write about Mary:

Monday, January 1, 1838

A sad new year's Day in one respect, for at the opening of last year poor Mary was with us. Very many things to be grateful for, since then, however. Increased reputation and means – good health and prospects. We never know the full value of blessings, 'till we lose them (we were not ignorant of this one when we had it, I hope), but if she were with us now, the same winning, happy, amiable companion – sympathising with all my thoughts and feelings more than any one I knew ever did or will – I think I should have nothing to wish for, but a continuance of such happiness. But she is gone, and pray God I may one day through his mercy rejoin her.

Tuesday, January 2, 1838

I wrote to Mrs Hogarth yesterday, taking advantage of the opportunity afforded me by her sending as a New Year's token a pen-wiper of poor Mary's, imploring her as strongly as I could to think of the many remaining claims upon her affection and exertions, and not to give way to unavailing grief. Her answer came to-night, and she seems hurt at my doing so – protesting that in all useful respects she is the same as ever. I meant it for the best, and still hope I did right. With Ainsworth all day, at Macrone's place on business. Afterwards to the ruins of the fire in the Borough, thence to the top of St Saviour's Church; back to his Club to dinner, and afterwards to Covent Garden where we met Browning. Ainsworth has a fine heart.

(Dickens and his mother-in-law were to become bitter enemies over the break-up of his marriage and treatment of her daughter Catherine. William Harrison Ainsworth was a popular historical novelist – his descriptions of the plague in *Old St Paul's* gave me the horrors in my childhood – published by John Macrone, who was also Dickens' first publisher. He collected and issued the *Sketches By Boz*, also persuading the famous George Cruikshank to provide illustrations. Macrone and Dickens afterwards fell out when the publisher wanted to cash in on Dickens' vastly increased celebrity with another edition of the *Sketches*, which Dickens had outgrown and considered "old work". Macrone died in 1839. The fire was at an oil-warehouse in Tooley Street – Dickens was always fascinated by fires. St Saviour's church was the present Southwark Cathedral. By "Covent Garden" the theatre of that name is meant.)

Wednesday, January 3, 1838

At home, and working at the Memoirs of Grimaldi all day.

Thursday, January 4, 1838

Do.

Friday, January 5, 1838

Do. – and finished, except my introduction and conclusion.

(Joseph Grimaldi, the noted clown, had died in May 1837 and a friend of his, Thomas Egerton Wilks, was to have revised and published his memoirs in return for a share in the proceeds. The m.s., however, was purchased by Richard Bentley, whose *Miscellany* Dickens was editing, and he turned the project over to Dickens. It is usually supposed that much of the book was actually written

by Dickens' father.)

Saturday, January 6, 1838

Our boy's birth day – one year old. A few people at night – only Forster, the Degax's, John Ross, Mitton, and the Beards besides our families – to twelfth Cake and forfeits.

This day last year, Mary and I wandered up and down Holborn and the streets about, for hours, looking after a little table for Kate's bedroom which we bought at last at the very first Broker's we had looked into, and which we had passed half a dozen times because *I didn't like* to ask the price. I took her out to Brompton at night as we had no place for her to sleep in; (the two mothers being with us). She came back again next day to keep house for me, and stopped nearly the rest of the month. I shall never be so happy again as in those Chambers three Stories high – never if I roll in wealth and fame. I would hire them to keep empty, if I could afford it.

(John Forster was Dickens' lifelong friend and first biographer. Jean François Degax, a Swiss immigrant, was the landlord of the *Prince of Wales* Hotel in Leicester Place, from 1810, where a Pickwick celebration dinner had been held on 18 November 1837. John Ross was a former colleague of Dickens from his days as a Parliamentary reporter. Thomas Mitton, a solicitor, and Thomas Beard, were among Dickens' oldest friends; the latter was best man at his wedding and godfather to his eldest son. The furniture-buying scene must have stayed in Dickens' mind, for in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, a novel he was writing five years later, it is to some degree paralleled. It contains a brother and sister, who, however, are only onlookers, and the comedy in the episode revolves round Charity Pecksniff and her doleful suitor, Mr Moddle, the reader being invited to ridicule her prurient mock-embarrassment at being seen asking the price of a bed.)

Sunday, January 7, 1838

Johns dined with us – and John Ross. A very quiet day. I walked with the former round the Regent's Park in the morning where we met Talfourd on Horseback to whose house I had been invited, to hear the reading of his New Play – as yet, a dead Secret. Very pressing for me to be there – to wait until 9 on the chance. No go.

(Richard Johns was a lieutenant in the Royal Marines, stationed many years on Ascension Island, and a contributor to Bentley's

Miscellany while Dickens was editor. Thomas Noon Talfourd, barrister, later judge, essayist and biographer of Charles Lamb; author of the immensely successful blank verse tragedy *Ion*. The new play was called *The Athenian Captive*. Dickens dedicated *The Pickwick Papers* to him. As a lawyer, defended Macready in the assault suit brought by Alfred Bunn; see *British Diarists, No. XX, Journal XXVII, 1.*)

Monday, January 8, 1838

I began the Sketches of Young Gentlemen to-day. One hundred and twenty five pounds for such a little book without my name to it, is pretty well. This and the "Sunday", by the bye, are the only two things I have not done as Boz.

(The *Sketches* were short pieces of occasional journalism. *Sunday under three Heads*, a pamphlet written against a projected Parliamentary measure, Sir Andrew Agnew's Sabbath Observance Bill, which would have closed all public buildings on Sundays.)

Tuesday, January 9, 1838

Went to the Sun office to insure my life, where the "Board" seem disposed to think I work too much. Made Forster and Pickthorn my doctor, the references – and after an interesting interview with the Board, and the Board's Doctor, came away – to work again.

(Dr Francis Peregrine Burrell Pickthorn, MRCS 1823, Dickens' family physician and "usual medical attendant". Wrote *Pathological and Practical Observations on Spinal Diseases*, 1831.)

Wednesday, January 10, 1838

At work all day, and to a quadrille party at night. City people and rather dull. Intensely cold coming home, and vague reports of a fire somewhere. Frederick says the Royal Exchange, at which I sneer – most sagely; for – [pointing hand after last word]

Thursday, January 11, 1838

To-day the papers are full of it, and it was the Royal exchange, Lloyds, and all the shops round the building. Called on Browne and went with him to see the ruins, of which we saw as much as we should have done if he had stopped at home.

I wanted to have found somebody to walk with me in the Snow to Hampstead Heath, and have a chop at the Castle, but not finding anybody disposed for the pilgrimage went into the city as aforesaid, and came home to dinner. Father here then, and Mitton in the evening, so no work done to-day.

(Frederick = Frederick William Dickens, the next brother in age, 1820-68. Lived with Dickens at Furnival's Inn before the latter's marriage. Given a place in Macrone's counting house; later a clerk in the Secretary's Office of the Custom House. *Jack Straw's Castle*, a Hampstead inn much patronised by Dickens about this time.)

Friday, January 12, 1838

At work all day, with the exception of a two hours' and a half walk with Kate in Oxford Street, Regent Street, and so forth.

Saturday, January 13, 1838

12 to 5 work.

Browne to dinner; and to bed by a little after 12.

(Hablôt Knight Browne, illustrator of Dickens' books from *Pickwick* to *A Tale of Two Cities*.)

Sunday, January 14, 1838

To church in the morning, and when I came home, I wrote the preceding portion of this diary which henceforth I make a stedfast [sic] resolution not to neglect or *paint*. I have not done it yet, nor will I; but say what rises to my lips – my mental lips at least – without reserve. No other eyes will see it, while mine are open in life – and although I dare say I shall be ashamed of a good deal in it, I should like to look over it, at the year's end. In Scott's Diary, which I have been looking at this morning, there are thoughts which have been mine by day and by night, in good spirits and bad, since Mary died.

Here follow two passages from the Journal of Sir Walter Scott, written after the death of his wife in May 1826. The entry continues:

I know but too well, how true all this is.

I dined at Talfourd's to-day, with no very pleasant party (excepting Meadows the actor who is a very agreeable man). Much astonished to hear that Macready expresses doubts of his new play, in no very pleasant manner, writing to the Serjeant to wait upon him, and merely saying "This is not Ion" – without a word of thanks for his labour. I am to hear it read tomorrow night.

(Drinkwater Meadows, comedian; a member of Macready's company at Covent Garden.)

Monday, January 15, 1838

Here ends this brief attempt at a diary. I grow sad over this checking off of days, and can't do it. C.D.

*

Having begun to write a diary in order to write about Mary, Dickens found the experience so distressing that he soon brought it to a stop. He found a similar difficulty with the autobiography which he began about 1847. Having persevered with it through the most humiliating part of his boyhood, the time at the blacking factory, as he neared the Maria Beadnell episode he found it impossible to continue, without transferring these bitter memories into the less stringent disciplines of fiction.

As for Mary Hogarth, she is usually taken for the prototype of a character who, although finding little critical favour today, was ranked by Dickens' contemporaries as one of his highest achievements – "Little Nell" in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. This attribution, however, rests on a somewhat shaky foundation. In the first place, Nell who is supposed to die at 14 has little in common with the actual life-story of Mary Hogarth. While writing the novel, Dickens appears to have been uncertain as to the way it would finish, and Nell's death was decided on only after Forster had come out in favour of that solution. Dickens remained cheerful and relaxed through the most part of its composition, did not mention Mary in connection with the book in his letters, and only on finishing it do we find him writing: "Poor Mary died again when I read over this sad story".

Errata – Journal XXVII, 4

pp. 14/15. The four quotations, dated 11 & 24 January and 6 & 7 July 1763, were mistakenly attributed to *Ansford Diary I*. In the new edition of the first two diary volumes, not yet published, the entries for the year 1763 have been transferred to *Ansford Diary II*. The old *Ansford I* contained that year but did not include any of the entries written while the diarist was in residence at Oxford. At present, the only place where these quotations may be checked is in the Hargreaves-Mawdsley edition, pp. 105 and 139.

p. 27 last line. Royal *Blue* Coach.

BOOK REVIEWS

A. N. Other's Woodforde

A. N. Wilson (ed.) *The Faber Book of Church and Clergy 1993*.

Reminiscent, as initially he is, of that highly adaptable gamesplayer of promiscuous loyalty, A. N. Wilson has created for himself a far more distinctive persona. While still connected in many minds with High Church Conservatism, he has long since outgrown the "young fogey" image associated with his days on the *Spectator*. His output of novels, biographies and criticism has been prolific. The best of it (including the highly-acclaimed biography of Tolstoy) is inspired; virtually all, not least 'Jesus', is controversial. *The Faber Book of Church and Clergy*, edited by Wilson, is the product of a self-confessed pot-boiler ("I have looked mainly among my own books for extracts ...") but unlike so many dreary compilations of its kind, it is full of good things.

Confining himself to British Christianity "from the age of the Venerable Bede to that of Barbara Pym", Wilson devotes by far the greater part of his book to the Anglican Church and much of it to the Victorian age. Kilvert, Keble and Augustus Hare thus figure prominently, as do Hawker of Morwenstow and the fictional residents of Anthony Trollope's rectories and bishop's palaces. Woodforde is represented by five extracts from the diary, fewer than Kilvert (14), Betjeman (8) and George Herbert (6) but more than Swift (4) or Bunyan (2). This says a good deal about a book which is clearly meant to entertain rather than to instruct. It is not intended for the "unbaptized generation" – something like the Great Unwashed in Wilson's eyes – and "those millions who wash the car on Sunday morning" are not likely to find much to entertain them here for he is preaching not even to the converted but rather to nostalgic cradle Anglicans like himself.

In making his selections from Woodforde, Wilson eschews the most frequently anthologised extracts from the diary: the prodigious fine pike, the drunken pigs, dining with the bishop, choosing instead entries which tell us something about the character of the diarist and his relationships with his fellow clergymen. Diary extracts could, very probably, have been found to furnish material for any of Wilson's twenty chapters – with the exception, perhaps, of those on 'Doubt' and 'Shrines'. In the chapter devoted to 'Clergy Wives' the "strutting" Mrs Howes would have been interesting company alongside Mrs Augustus Hare ("I am amused to think how

little most women would have suited him ...”) and Trollope’s Mrs “You defy us, then?” – Proudie. The chapter largely concerned with the architecture, furnishing and atmosphere of ‘Church Buildings’ might have been given a more practical perspective if reference had been made to Woodforde’s reflections on the “Bill for mending the Lead &c. of my Chancel”. Could there be any more intractable example of ‘Stony Ground’ than that of Robert Astick of Ringland who “... was a long time before he could be prevailed upon to marry her ... and at the Altar behaved very unbecoming”?

Sins of omission are, of course, a necessary evil in the case of such books. Given the nature of the beast, however, it is, surely, churlish to complain that it does not have more heads or feet or stripes. Although less exotic than the “Mongooz from Madagascar”, brought to the parson’s door on a summer’s day in 1784, we cannot complain about that part of its anatomy which is Woodfordean.

Readers will be pleased to be reminded of the occasion when, during Mr du Quesne’s visit to Cole, he and Woodforde walked over to Bruton for divine service. It is one of those diary entries that the mind’s eye can easily animate. How agreeable it is to contemplate the diarist and his seventy-two year-old friend chatting together as they walked up the Brue valley to church, Woodforde, no doubt, proudly pointing out the principal features of this his native heath to his polite and appreciative visitor. And then what confusion and embarrassment when they arrived at the crowded church only to discover that “we were one Hour behind”! Mr du Quesne’s surprise at being late may well have paled when, once they had taken their place “in the large Seat in the Chancel”, he has time to take in the rococo extravagances around him. Although Wilson entitles the extract *Morning Service*, placing it in a chapter on ‘Church-Going’, he does not deny us the rest of the day’s events – dinner at Cole with the more respectable of Woodforde’s relatives and, for the gentlemen (James Woodforde, du Quesne, Mr Pounsett and Robert White) a walk to Cole-Style to be entertained to a pipe and “cockagee Cyder” by Mr Sam. Pounsett.

No less than three of Wilson’s extracts are concerned with Woodforde’s opinions of fellow clergy. None of them, unsurprisingly, appear in the chapter called ‘Odor Theologicum’ although the one referring to the visit of Mr Campbell to Weston Parsonage – “I treated him as one who would be too free if treated too kindly” – might more appropriately have been placed there rather than as an example of what is ‘Mighty Offensive’. Readers of the

frontispiece to Vol. XXVI, no. 4 of this Journal will remember that, according to Johnson, it was "This merriment of parsons" which was "mighty offensive" and may consider that a more suitable entry for inclusion might be one such as that for 18 May, 1771:

M^r. Howes & Wife & M^{rs}. Davy, M^r. Bodham and his
Brother, and M^r. Du Quesne all dined and spent the
Afternoon & part of the Evening with us to day –
I gave them for Dinner a Dish of Maccarel, 3.
young Chicken boiled and some Bacon, a neck of
Pork roasted and a Gooseberry Pye hot –
We laughed immoderately after Dinner on M^{rs}.
Howes's being sent to Coventry by us for an Hour –
What with laughing and eating hot Gooseberry Pye
brought on me the Hickupps with a violent Pain
in my Stomach which lasted till I went to bed –
At Cards Quadrille this Evening – lost – 1 : 2 : 6

For his chapter on 'Pastoralia' Wilson chooses from the diary an entry from the last year of Woodforde's life by which time his ability to exercise his pastoral duties was severely curtailed. It is the occasion of the visit to the Parsonage of the "reduced clergyman from Oxfordshire", Richard Page. It is a fascinating event not least because, although occurring some months after Woodforde claimed that "the Vis Vitae" was "almost extinguished", it clearly excited his interest. The fact that the indigent priest "seemed well acquainted with Oxford and with many of my old Cotemporaries there" and his petition carried the names of Mr Maynard and Marquess Townsend persuaded Woodforde to give him half a guinea but when, on his departure, Ben Leggett reports that Page had a companion who asked a lot of questions and had himself pocketed the half guinea, the Parson becomes suspicious that he has been the victim of a confidence trick. The entry contains one of the last of the brief verbal portraits at which Woodforde excelled: his visitor was "a short Man and thin, talked rather fast and made a plausible Story".

The diarist felt far more charitable on the occasion when in 1786, on a visit to Weston House, he was introduced to Mr Chamberlain, the Benedictine monk. It is difficult to know what surprises Woodforde the most, the fact that the gentleman had given up "Preferment in the Church of England to the Value of £800 per Annum", his being "A very good kind of Man ... and very sensible" or the fact that "It being Friday M^r. Chamberlain eat no Meat only

some Fish and some Rice Pudding"! Despite having little time for Catholicism – he would have been happy in reporting to the bishop in 1780 that, as regards Roman Catholics in his parish, "I do not know of one in it" – the diarist's opinion of the man is not affected. While clearly failing to understand why Chamberlain has followed to strange a calling – unless it is that he "has been in France &c." – there is no denying a kind of admiration. It, incidentally, says something of Wilson's prejudices that Father Chamberlain is placed among a generally sympathetic collection of 'Monks and Nuns' whereas the 'Odor Theologicum' is directed against an assortment of nonconformists.

Beating the Bounds is a pagan tradition, associated with the driving away of winter, which became absorbed into Christian Ascension-tide ceremonial. Wilson might well have chosen the famous occasion when the bounds of Weston Longville were beaten in 1780 to illuminate that aspect of 'The Christian Year'. Few accounts of the ceremony can match that of Woodforde. Instead he uses a much more typical Weston ritual, Christmas dinner for the elderly poor at the Parsonage. He chooses the white Christmas of 1798. I am not sure why, when that of 1800 is very similar – Mr Dade rather than Mr Cotman took the service at Weston Church and it was "Old Mary Heavers" rather than "poor Old Ned Howes" who had her dinner sent home – but the entry for the later year contains the unconsciously symbolic, poignant line: "I lighted my great Wax-Candle as usual on this High-day, but it is almost burnt up."

This is an enjoyable book, accessible to a broader church than that envisaged by its author and one in which the "kindly light" of our Parson is seen still to glow brightly.

Martial Rose: *The Misericords of Norwich Cathedral*. Photographs by Ken Harvey. The Larks Press. 1994.

This is a splendid little book, performing admirably all it sets out to do. It contains a colour photograph of every one of the misericords in Norwich Cathedral. And, since most of us are scarcely to be called in touch with the Middle Ages and the niceties of mediaeval thought, it delivers us from the pains of ignorance with its lucid and comprehensive explanatory notes, printed handily by or opposite to the photographs. If I have a very slight reservation, it is that the scale of the photographs is rather small, making detailed study sometimes difficult; but that can easily be remedied with the help of a magnifying glass. For once, I can find nothing amiss in the publisher's notice, or "blurb", which claims, rightly enough, that modern scholarship and photographic skill have been employed in the service of mediaeval craftsmanship at its best to produce a fine record of the misericords of Norwich Cathedral.

But what is a misericord? The choir stalls in cathedrals had been provided with seats since the twelfth century, but the monks were not allowed to use them and were expected to remain standing so long as the service they were taking part in lasted. In monastic cathedrals there were eight daily offices, from early morning until late at night, as well as at least one Mass a day which the monks were supposed to attend. All this could obviously be very tiring; so for the benefit of those monks who were elderly or not in robust health the misericord was introduced. It may be described as a narrow ledge supported by a corbel on the under side of a choir stall, and is visible only when the seat is in its tipped-up position. Monks could make use of this concession by perching on the ledge while appearing to be standing up and thus, as it were, taking the weight off their feet during the long services. It was no doubt not very comfortable, but certainly provided some relief from the fatigue of standing for lengthy periods of time.

This device had a purely utilitarian derivation and purpose, and some epochs might well have been content to leave it at that. But the wood carvers of the Middle Ages used the corbel below the ledge as an opportunity of exercising their decorative art, producing carvings that are often strange, sometimes extremely beautiful, always interesting in that they give us an insight into the minds of the people who created them and the epoch in which they lived.

The Norwich misericords are all from late in the Middle Ages, the

fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and probably came into being after a terrible storm in 1361, which lasted seven days, blew down the tower and inflicted great damage on the choir. It is likely that the plans for replacing the wrecked stalls were not carried out until the second decade of the fifteenth century. A great number of armorial shields erected during the episcopate of Bishop Wakering (1416-25) suggest that some East Anglian gentry families, many of them related by ties of blood or marriage, funded the costs of replacing the choir furniture. One misericord greatly aids the dating of the Wakering stalls in that it is a portrait of Richard Courtenay, Wakering's predecessor. It is said to be the only misericord in England to show the positive identification of a bishop. Courtenay's initials, "R" and "C", appear beneath a crown, for he claimed to be a relation of the king, Henry V, whom he accompanied to Harfleur before the battle of Agincourt.

In 1463 lightning caused a fire which not only destroyed the roof of the cathedral but also further damaged the choir. As part of the repairs, some new choir-stalls were carved; and there were more alterations following another fire during the episcopate of Bishop Nykke (1501-36). A final reorganisation of the seating in 1948 left 64 choir-stalls, of which only four have no misericord. In the book the photographs of all the stalls are numbered handily at the top of each page in bold type, S1-33 and N1-31.

Most misericords follow a common pattern of design: a central subject, taking up most of the space on the corbel, with supporters left and right. Very often the subject of the supporters shows no relationship to that of the central carving, although Norwich Cathedral has a greater than average number of those which do so relate. The curved space between the underside of the ledge and the flat base of the misericord is sometimes utilized for dramatic effect. This can be seen in the carving of Gluttony, one of the Seven Deadly Sins, where the overhang causes the figure's head to be tipped back, while his hat falls from his head. Anger, another Deadly Sin, has his head forced down by the curve upon the right, while on the opposite side the boar on which he is riding thrusts up its snout and tusks into the overhanging ledge. There is some change in style between the early and later fifteenth century examples, the former being simpler, with only a single figure or two interacting, and the latter showing more complex story material with several figures. The elbow-rests have very small carvings which, as the introduction to the book truly states, "often present us with masterpieces in

miniature. Again, the use of the natural curve of the rest to accommodate the sideways and downwards flow of curling hair, angels' wings, an eagle's twisted neck, or the acrobat's back-flip, is often exquisite".

At Norwich in particular, whenever a major architectural development is present, such as roof bosses and stained glass, the choice of subjects commonly follows a particular scheme which is carried out in total integrity. The misericords, on the other hand, appear to have had their subjects taken practically at random. They feature ordinary life in the form of various events of the farming year, domestic scenes and portraits of two, possibly three actual people, as well as many beasts, real and imaginary, each having its own allegorical meaning, four of the Seven Deadly Sins already mentioned, two signs of the Zodiac, two examples of the Green Man or Jack-on-the-green, and four of the "woodwose" or wild man. Many of them display great energy: a man fights with an animal, or another man. Those of knights and their ladies, on the other hand, like the beautiful No. 7 on the North side of the choir, are full of dignity. Great care has been taken with the details of their clothing.

An ideal way to use this book would be to go to Norwich Cathedral and, with it in hand, to look at the actual misericords themselves, using it as one would employ the services of a guide; and then to go home and refresh your memory of what you have seen by reference to the finely lucid descriptions. But even without this, the book is a very worthy addition to the large library of works about the treasures of Norwich Cathedral. It can be very whole-heartedly recommended, without reservations of any kind. At the price of £7.50, it is simply a bargain, like most of the books issued by the Larks Press, who set a standard in this way that it would be a good thing if more publishers imitated.

PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY ANNUAL "FROLIC", SOMERSET, 19-21 MAY 1995

It was a fine sunny evening as members arrived at the Holbrook House Hotel near Wincanton for the beginning of the Frolic. The number attending, forty-two, was slightly down on last year but all the hotel rooms were taken and a few members stayed in other establishments. The setting was perfect. The hotel is a fine old Georgian building placed in beautiful and well kept grounds with a heated swimming pool, tennis courts and croquet lawn. Inside, the hotel also has spacious and gracious reception rooms.

The hall and lounge area provided very comfortable surroundings for the initial gathering of members, including some who were attending their first Frolic. The reception was followed by an excellent sit-down buffet with sweet and cheese served in the fine dining room.

We then moved into the Kent Room for the Annual General Meeting. The formal proceedings were rapidly covered and Roy Winstanley indicated that he has processed the proofs of his forthcoming biography of Woodforde and hoped that it would soon be published. Sadly, only a small proportion of members have so far sent in the deed of covenant and we were reminded how much this will boost the Society's funds. Three members were elected to the committee and George Bunting confirmed that this was his last appearance as Chairman. In his parting speech, he referred to his nearly twenty years in office and gave examples of the major achievements and growth of the Society during that time. Nigel Custance then spoke on behalf of members, to express our grateful thanks to George for his dedicated efforts as our Chairman and for his great contribution to the success of the Society.

Phyllis Stanley then told us that there would be another quiz to test our knowledge of the Diary with a special incentive for the winner: he or she would have the privilege of devising the quiz for the Frolic in Norfolk next year! After the meeting, a large display of Society publications was available for sale.

It was a glorious sunny morning on Saturday when the coach left the hotel at 9.15 for Castle Cary. En route we stopped at the place where the murderer Jack White was hanged by the roadside during Parson Woodforde's time and who was left there as a grim reminder for some years. On arrival at the town, we stopped at South Cary House, the home of the Parson's close friend Justice Creed and his

father "old Mr. Creed". The house is now used as an old people's home but the manager had kindly arranged that we could look at some of the downstairs rooms and the spacious gardens. We all gathered in the elegant drawing room where Justice Creed had entertained the Parson on so many occasions and I gave a short and impromptu talk about the Creed family.

The next journey was to our Chairman's house in the hamlet of Hadspen, about a mile out of Castle Cary. The journey took us along very narrow lanes through delightful and hilly country, and after climbing up a steep hill we arrived at the Buntings' lovely old house to be welcomed by Mrs Bunting and by her collie dog, who seemed very happy to see us, if rather excited and overwhelmed by such a large number of visitors. We wandered around the beautiful gardens in this idyllic place and were served coffee by Mrs Bunting and her helpers. One of the rooms contained a large collection of Woodforde memorabilia which many members were browsing through right up to the time of our departure. We could also wander through the rooms and passages to look at some interesting Woodfordean pictures and engravings including an original painting by Samuel Woodforde.

By mid-day, the sun had largely disappeared as we began the journey to Shepton Mallet. We passed through the hamlet of Cole where the Pounsett family lived and so often hospitably entertained our diarist and his niece; then skirted through the neighbouring town of Bruton before arriving at the Shrubbery Hotel in the centre of Shepton Mallet for a buffet lunch. Afterwards, we walked to Shepton Mallet church where Woodforde had preached in November 1771. But here we had a slight hitch in the proceedings because we arrived at the church just in time to see the bride arrive for her wedding. After apologies from the vicar for the mix-up we were told to come back in about an hour. Fortunately, we were able to make use of the time by proceeding to the next visit – to the prison which is also situated near the centre of the town.

After assembling outside the main gates of the prison, we heard an interesting talk by Mr Disney who used to be the prison librarian. We learned that it is the oldest prison in England, being built in 1610, and is surrounded by stone walls some of which reach a height of thirty feet. The prison is still in use and so we could not view the interior. After being closed for a few years in the thirties it had been used as a military prison during the last war. In 1942 it was taken over by the Americans who executed twenty-one of their

prisoners within the walls, nineteen being hanged and two shot. We also saw the location of the treadmill, used until the Victorian era.

We were then led through some charming old passage ways around the centre of the town – and these make the town much more interesting than would be evident to passing tourists. We learnt that the town had been a very large centre of the woollen industry and we saw some remnants of the old woollen mills alongside the stream. Continuing our walk about among some old houses we saw a very high “spite” wall built to screen the gardens of a manor house from a neighbouring property. On arrival back at the church we were relieved that the wedding service had finished, although the party was still being photographed in the churchyard. Inside the church, Mr Fred Davis, a local historian, described the main features of the church which has Saxon and Norman origins and in the chancel there were many memorials to the family of the local vicar Mr Wickham who was a good friend of Woodforde. Wickham also became vicar of Castle Cary during Woodforde’s final term of residence in Somerset.

We then walked through the centre of the town to see the Market Cross dating from about 1500 and also the location of the two main inns used by Woodforde on his many visits to the town to see his friends including his one-time sweetheart, Betsy White. Finally we visited the small local museum which has some old implements from the prison and a reconstruction of a “back room” used by home workers to make shoes – the shoe industry is still represented in the town by one of the Clarke’s factories.

The coach left Shepton Mallet on time for a short journey to the neighbouring village of Bowlish where we had an excellent tea at a restaurant, Bowlish House. This was the last event in what had been a very busy and interesting day. We had been fairly fortunate with the weather; it was cloudy but it had remained dry. We embarked on the coach, somewhat weary, for the return journey to Holbrook House, passing en route through Woodforde’s village of Ansford, and we arrived back at the hotel in good time to change and prepare for the formal evening dinner.

During the champagne reception, Mrs Bunting was presented with a bouquet of flowers and Nigel Custance expressed our appreciation for her hospitality to members and her support of the Chairman over so many years. We had an excellent dinner followed by toasts to Parson Woodforde and the Society and then moved into an adjoining lounge for a talk by Roy Winstanley. This was a masterful

and fascinating account of Woodforde's time in Somerset which illustrated how the diary for that period revealed much of the Parson's character and his maturing attitude. It was emphasized how the scant coverage of the Somerset period in the O.U.P. edition has been superseded by the nine volumes of the Society's publications. We also learned in the talk how the young Woodforde developed as a householder during his curacy at Babcary, about five miles from Ansford, where he was much interested in domestic matters, including that of growing his own vegetables and proudly entertaining his Ansford friends and relations to dinner.

After a leisurely breakfast on the Sunday morning, we set off in cars for the hamlet of Pitcombe situated about five miles from the hotel. The church at Pitcombe had been used by Woodforde as his local church during his lengthy visits to Somerset from Norfolk when he stayed with his sister Mrs Pounsett at the nearby village of Cole. The church was in a beautiful setting down a one-track road and although it was not the building known to Woodforde, having been rebuilt in the nineteenth century, the church bells rang out to give us a warm welcome. The tiny church was full, largely by Woodfordians, but there were also several local residents. We sang some old familiar hymns and a most interesting sermon was given by our member, the Rev. Brian Pateman, who alluded much to Woodforde's enjoyment of the area and of his many friendships. It is published on another page of this issue.

We left Pitcombe after some careful manoeuvring to extract cars from the cramped surroundings and made for Castle Cary and the house which used to be occupied in Woodforde's time by the renowned Melliar family and now the home of members Derek and Mollie Matthews.

Although called South Cottage, it is really a very large house. The original building is of the seventeenth century with alterations and additions, such as "M^{rs}. Melliar's new Room" mentioned by Woodforde in 1773. Early in this century the axis of the house was swung round and a new main entrance made at the side. The level of the road outside has also been lowered by several feet; and this isolates the original front door. But in honour of our visit it stood open so we could pass through, as Parson Woodforde so often did when visiting the Melliards. When we were gathered in the large hall, Derek Matthews spoke about the history of the house and described the front drawing room with its splendid fireplace. After examining that room we returned to the hall and Derek completed

his talk about the rest of the house and invited us to look around the other rooms including the main upstairs bedrooms. The house has been very well restored by Derek and Mollie who have taken great care in refurbishing the house to the eighteenth century period and the choice of decor and furnishings has involved some careful research into contemporary colour schemes which have been faithfully reproduced. We were grateful for some welcome refreshment with sherry and soft drinks and the sunny weather made it pleasant to wander around the large attractive gardens.

Soon after 1 pm we made our own way back to Holbrook House where we had lunch, another excellent meal, and our final conversations with fellow members. Phyllis Stanley announced the result of the competition and presented the prize to the joint winners Martin Brayne and Roy Creamer. During lunch we were also told about the election of new officers of the Society although the news had spread around earlier in the day. Nigel Custance becomes our new Chairman. During coffee in the lounge many members were saying how much they had enjoyed the Frolic and so we departed, each with very happy memories of a most enjoyable occasion and with many thanks to those who had organized such a successful programme.

THE PARSON WOODFORDE SERMON: 21 May 1995, Pitcombe, Somerset

Text: "Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice; and the God of peace shall be with you." (Philippians 4: 8-9)

Among the helpful comments that have been made on those words of St Paul are these two. The one, "There is much in the world that is mean and ugly, and there is much that is gracious and beautiful. The question is not what do we see, but on what do we fix our eyes ... think about ... talk about. The other, is that we look at the life-style of Christians holding a position in the Church, because it is expected of them in particular that they will be helpful examples of Christian living to us all.

These two comments are quite useful guidelines to us in this Somersetshire village this morning, as we look for a few moments at the Pitcombe of two centuries ago which James Woodforde knew and mentions in his diary, and as we look at him himself on the occasions he was here.

Two hundred years ago Pitcombe was “a small parish two miles south west from Brewton, containing forty houses; most of which, with the church, are romantically situated in a low narrow dingle between fine hills interspersed with rocks and woods” (J. Collinson). The parish of Pitcombe was more than this village – it embraced as well “the houses ... scattered in the hamlets of Cole and Hadspen” and “Hadspen House – a good stone mansion”. (J. Collinson)

This whole parish – Pitcombe, Cole, Hadspen and Honeywick – was a source of continuing joyous pleasure in Parson Woodforde’s life. Here lived William Perry from whom he purchased oats, and who on delivering them “stopped and smoked a Pipe with me” (14/1/1773); there at Mr Hadley’s “little Ale House” he played at fives (29/6/1773) and this same Hadley “blackened round my father’s Monument”, for which he paid him “one shilling, that being the most he would accept” (1/7/1773); here he went “afishing with Nets and ... caught several good Trout” (8/6/1782); here, one Sunday afternoon on his way from church, he “stopped by a very fine Spring in Pitcombe Street in which I threw in a Shilling for the Boys there to scramble for”. Here (23/6/1782) he experienced a great kindness: “We went out again to Pitcomb and fished ... we were caught in a very heavy thunderstorm I was wet through before I could get to Shelter – which at last we did at one Taylor Wilmotts who behaved very kind to us and gave us a glass of wine apiece”. Woodforde remembered that and on a later occasion he records: “... called in at Taylor Wilmotts and drank some of his ale – I gave his comical Maid Nan 0.1.0”. (23/6/1782)

But the great friend this parish gave Woodforde lived, not in this village, but at Cole: John Pounsett, a respectable middle-aged farmer when he first appears in the Diary in August 1761 at Molly White’s funeral. A decade on finds them often together, sharing meals, exchanging presents, and often with them Woodforde’s sister Jenny. 28 March 1773 Woodforde writes: “M^r. John Pouncett of Cole spent the afternoon, supped and spent the evening at Parsonage. He has an inclination for my sister Jane. I think it would do well”. It did; and on 24 May the next year Woodforde married

them by Licence in Ansford church and wrote in his diary: "Pray God send thy blessing upon them both and may they be happy in each other". The following May a daughter, Jenny, was born to them and on Michaelmas Day that same year this "little Maid" was christened, Woodforde being her godfather.

In a note on page 223 of Vol. I of the *First Six Norfolk Years*, Mr Winstanley has written: "There can be no doubt that JW felt for his sister Jane a measure of affection he gave to no-one else", and so it was natural that once he was settled into the Parsonage at Weston Longville, Woodforde on his periodic excursions back to Somerset should stay with the Pounsetts; and from 1782 this was at Cole Place in this parish. From there he made his visits to relatives around the neighbourhood, to old friends and acquaintances, to the local clergy he knew, and to fish and to walk, and to inspect his lands and property. It was also there that the day he called "Dies Memorabilis" began: Tuesday 4 August 1789. He and his niece Jenny joined other relatives and friends, and journeyed to Lord Digby's park at Sherborne, to see the King and Queen, and members of the Royal Family. They were part of a crowd of some 5000, and were lucky enough to be quite near the Royal Party. "Pray God bless them all"; it was, Woodforde wrote, "a long day of much Pleasure", from which they arrived back at Cole about midnight "safe and well". Perhaps now you can see why I believe this whole parish, and Woodforde's visits to it and stays in it, were a continuing joyous pleasure in his life.

Let us pause for some reflection. In our Lord's life were places He made for sometimes for their beauty or quiet isolation, like for example fields and hills; sometimes because home was there as at Nazareth; and sometimes because friends were there as at Bethany. It is the same for us; dotted over the country – and possibly overseas too – are places whose attraction for us is really because relatives or highly-regarded friends are there. In a Lenten book, which my wife and I read together on the mornings of Lent this year, the author – Preb. D. W. Cleverley Ford – said: "If at any time there has come into our lives some good man or some good woman whom we admire, we should count the fact as evidence that the grace of God is upon us. It is people that lift us up ... God sometimes provides us with the friends we need for a specific period of time – they were the right friends for that time. We should be faithful to friends". And a verse in the Book of Proverbs reads: "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly" (18:24). Now that was

Woodforde in respect of the relatives and friends he had here and in the neighbourhood – he was faithful to them by keeping in touch, following their fortunes and honouring their memory. He did it in three ways – one way was by his periodic visits, another way was through his New Year’s Eve custom: “Drank our Friends Healths everywhere with many returns of the present season”. (31/12/1781) His third way was by letter. “Wrote a long letter to my sister Pounsett”. (4/2/1774) “Had a long letter from my sister Pounsett ... My sister acquaints us that Will: has been in Somerset upwards of a fortnight. I am glad Will: Coleman* is got safe into Somerset”. (20/8/1785) “A letter from my sister Pounsett in which it was mentioned that Nancy’s sister Juliana was, it was much feared, in decline (1/3/88) “I sent a very long letter to my sister ... and in it a recipe from D^r. Buchan† for Juliana Woodforde ... for her bad cough”. (15/3/1788) So much did Woodforde rely on this interchange of letters, that should one from Cole be, in his opinion, overdue, he would be miserable: “Expected much a Letter from my Sister Pounsett ... but had none It was a great disappointment to me”. (11/1/1783) Woodforde relied much upon the letter to express his loyalty to, and concern for, both relative and friend here. In a broadcast talk C. A. Joyce once remarked: “I once heard a sermon preached about what the parson called ‘keeping in touch’ and among other things he talked about writing letters. I do want to emphasise that this idea of keeping in touch is a good one, and I sometimes think it is one of the things missing today”. Parson Woodforde would, I am sure, have approved of both our Journal and the Newsletter and this annual Frolic as a means of our keeping in touch with each other within the Society. Are we as good as he at using “keeping in touch” by letter – or for us the telephone – as a tangible expression of our loyalty to, and concern for all the relatives and friends with which God has blessed us?

Our last look at Woodforde in Pitcombe illustrates for us his life-style as far as Sunday observance is concerned. The teaching of the Church of England is that her members – ordained and lay – should endeavour on the Lord’s Day to be in the Lord’s house with the Lord’s people at the church’s services. This, it seems, was Woodforde’s lifelong aim as these two remarks from his closing years make plain: “It gave me much pleasure and satisfaction in my

* This was the unsatisfactory serving man Woodforde had recently dismissed. Afraid that he would quickly sink into vagrancy or crime, Woodforde paid a guinea and a half to help him back to the West Country.

† Dr William Buchan, author of the immensely popular *Domestic Medicine*.

Attendance this day on Divine Service. It was ever my greatest Pleasure to pay that homage to our great Creator which even only from Gratitude, it demands. It also gave me pleasure to see so many communicants – 25. or 26. – present”. (3/4/1796, Easter Day) “Blessed be God! that I was able to do my Duty at Church again”. (22/3/1795) The Diary several times records his attending worship here, the first occasion seeming to be 23 June 1782 – “Mr. Pounsett and my Sister, Nancy and self took a Walk after Dinner to Pitcomb Church and there heard Mr. Rich^d. Goldsborough read Prayers and Preached but rather affected”. Here, on 6 August 1786, the minister officiating was Mr John Goldsborough; he read Prayers but “instead of a Sermon he read an Act of Parliament lately passed concerning donations given to the Poor”. Here on 26 July 1789, Richard Goldsborough again officiated and preached “a very good Sermon”.

On some Sundays Woodforde did not come to church; occasionally he says why – once or twice it was because he was unwell, once it was because the service-time clashed with Sunday dinner, and once (partly) because he thought “they would be crowded at Church”. (30/7/1786) Was that because the congregations were unusually large ones, or because the then church – “a neat building of one aisle, with a tower at the west end containing three bells” (J. Collinson) – was small in size? However, non-attendance at church did not mean that Sunday went unobserved: “Did not go to Pitcomb Church this morning but read our Books at home”. (1/10/1786) “We did not go to Pitcomb Church this afternoon – I read a Sermon to them at home of one Fishers”. (10/9/1786) For most of his life – and certainly his last years – this was Woodforde’s habit on the occasions he was absent from church, but it was always second-best: “It grieves me much that I am rendered unable ... to attend at Church being so very infirm”. (17/12/1797)

Mr Cleverley Ford, in the book to which I have already referred, writes: “Sunday, since the dawn of the Christian era, has been the day for worship. Church buildings come into their own on it. Church is the Christians home, the household of faith, the place to assemble, where the men and women of faith meet. It is a rough test of the reality of our Christian profession to ask ourselves how much Church attendance means to us.” Woodforde’s life-style in these respects was definitely to hallow Sunday as a day for worship, and preferably to do so in the parish church. In God’s providence, to read Woodforde’s Diary, to join this Society, is to be put in touch with one who, in his day, was a good man.

In a variety of ways this whole parish of Pitcombe was a real source of happiness in Parson Woodforde's life. In the many links between it and him are "things true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report". Together we have noticed a number of them. And now, as in a few hours time we take leave of each other to return home, let us take these things with us. Let us do so, daring to hope that had Woodforde preached this sermon himself, he would in humility and loyal friendship, have made St Paul's appeal his own: "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, put it into practice; and the God of peace shall be with you".

NOTES AND QUERIES

Perhaps the last word on Norfolk Beefans!

An attentive reader of *Dombey and Son* (Ch. LX, p. 847 in the 'New Oxford Illustrated Dickens' edition) will no doubt mark this passage:

The fruit laboriously gathered from the tree of knowledge ... had been subjected to so much pressure, that it had become a kind of intellectual Norfolk Biffin and had nothing of its original form or flavour remaining.

I am not sure of the exact meaning here, but it would appear to refer to a characteristic peculiar to this kind of apple, of having been totally altered by the people who grew it. This is precisely the charge often brought against fruit growers and merchants today.

Perhaps one of our erudite readers will be able to explain just what happened to the Norfolk Beefans which rendered them in Victorian times so different from those locally grown apples that Parson Woodforde used to give away by the basketful to his neighbours.

Crank(e)y

Lot No. 88 at the third day (Thursday 21 April 1803) of the sale of Parson Woodforde's household effects, bought by Mr Girling for £1. 8. 0, was described as

Matrass, in a crankey case.

For once, we receive no comfort from the Shorter OED which defines 'cranky' in a series of terms relating to human oddities: "out of gear; crazy"; "cross-tempered, awkward"; "crotchety; peculiar", although it could also mean "crooked; full of crannies". However, 'crank', of which the dictionary says the primary meaning is of something bent or crooked, is rather more helpful. It cites a number of meanings of which "elbow-shaped" or "zig-zag" form part.

So could 'crankey' refer simply to a pattern on the surface of the mattress-case?

Child's Play

[1772]

Dec: 26 –

I breakfasted, supped & slept again at Parsonage ...

I dined & spent the Afternoon at M^r. Creeds with him and his Father, my sister Jane, M^r. Pew Sen^r., his Son Will^m & his Daughter Betsy – we had an exceeding fine Turkey roasted for Dinner &c. ...

we played at blind Mans Buff this Evening at M^r. Creeds

[1773]

Jan: 11 –

I breakfasted, dined, supped & slept again at Parsonage

M^r. Caleb Penny & Wife, the two Miss Curtiss's, Miss Plummer, Jenny Clarke, M^r. James & Sam^l. Clarke spent the afternoon supped & spent the evening at Parsonage as did Sister Clarke.

D^r. Clarke spent the former part of the Evening at Parsonage.

We were all very merry & did not break up till after 12. o'clock

We got to blind Mans Buff after Supper –

Brother John also supped & spent the evening with us –

The note to the first of these passages in *Ansford Diary V* reads:

To our way of thinking, there must be something very strange in the notion of this children's game being played at a party where all the guests were adults; but more than one activity then thought suitable for grown-up people to take part in have since been relegated to the nursery, or more or less self-consciously revived, such as the carol-singing of Christmas "Waits".

Afterthought: but was it the same game?

Mutton pies

*All ye that love what's nice and rarish
At Oxford, in St Mary's parish,
BEN TYRELL, Cook of high Renown
To please the palates of the Gown,
At three-pence, makes MUTTON PIES,
Which thus he begs to advertise:
He welcomes all his friends at seven
Each Saturday and Wedn'sday Even.*

Mr Tyrell, Cook, in the High Street, Oxford, having formed a laudable design of obliging the University with Mutton Pies twice a Week, placed this advertisement to that effect in the *Oxford Journal*, 25 November 1758.

And sausages

On Saturday October the Third, 1761, Sarah Herbert, wife of John Herbert, in the High-Street, near East-Gate, Oxford, will begin making of Sausages, where all those that please to favour her with their Custom, may depend on being extremely well served, she having the receipt of her late Aunt Dorothy Spreadbury, Cook. NB Her Sausages are likewise to be had at William Hanly's, Bookbinder, opposite Lincoln College, Oxford.

From *Oxford Today*, Michaelmas Issue 1994

Letters and enquiries to: Mrs Ann Elliott, The Green Corner, Deopham Green, Wymondham, Norfolk NR18 9AB.

shall I call thee bird ...

There was once a very literal-minded ornithologist who, coming across Wordsworth's famous lines on the cuckoo –

O cuckoo, shall I call thee bird,
Or but a wand'ring voice?

– thought they meant that the poet was saying he had never seen a cuckoo, and took him to task with some asperity. Wordsworth, he snarled, must have seen *thousands* of cuckoos ...

I was thinking about this during our latest Frolic, as soon as I realised that a strange thing was happening. I would not expect to find cuckoos in the city centre of Birmingham, or in any other place from which Nature has been expelled, as the other poet, the Roman one, said, with a pitchfork. But in rural Somerset, in the very heart of the Woodforde country, and in the month of May, when the old rhyme assures us that "he sings all day"; when I listened for his call with the same expectation as if I were in a concert hall towards the end of the slow movement in the Pastoral Symphony, he was not even a wandering voice. He was not there at all.

Two years ago, I was in the same neighbourhood, and there was no lack of cuckoos then. Indeed, as I wrote in the Journal at the time, I heard one who had started up unusually late in the evening, when it was already beginning to grow dark. But none this year, throughout the whole week-end.

The reason, I am afraid, is not far to seek; although I most devoutly hope I am wrong and that my cuckoo-less week-end was a pure accident, and that all the cuckoos in the county were singing away like mad, providing only that I were out of earshot. On the other hand, it may be a sign that, almost certainly owing to the destructive tendencies of modern intensive agriculture, this once almost excessively common bird is growing scarce; a prospect that only those who prefer dead silence to bird-song can face with equanimity.

Another piece of news from the avian world is also saddening. Mollie Matthews has lost her peacock, so long a vividly colourful ornament to the garden. He was eaten by a fox who left only a pile of gorgeous feathers behind. We willingly associate peacocks with that part of Castle Cary. It was just up the road, in Creed's home, that Woodforde first saw a peacock displaying, a sight which moved him to write:

... and most Noble it is. How wonderful are Thy Works O God.

(ed.)

THE PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

The Society was founded in 1968 by the Rev. Canon L. Rule Wilson and may be said to have two main aims: one, to extend and develop knowledge of James Woodforde's life and the society in which he lived, and the other, to provide opportunity for fellow enthusiasts to meet together from time to time in places associated with the diarist, and to exchange news and views.

Membership of the Parson Woodforde Society is open to any person of the age of 18 years and over upon successful application and upon payment of the subscription then in force, subject only to the power of the committee to limit membership to a prescribed number.

PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY COMMITTEE 1995/6

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