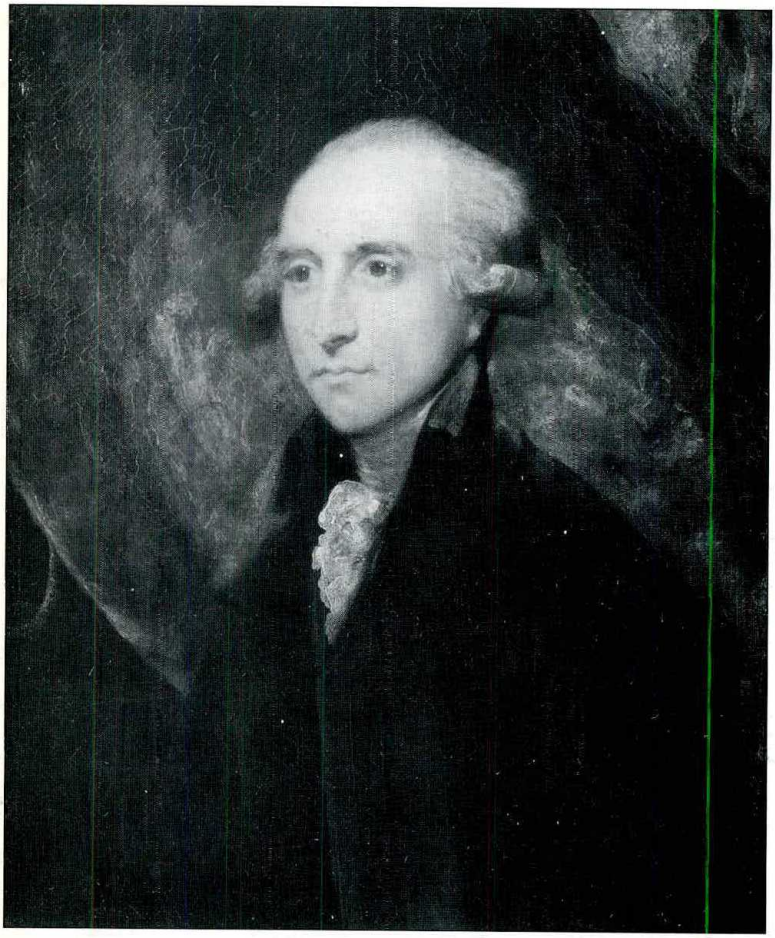
PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

Quarterly Journal



WILLIAM WINDHAM III by SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS
By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London

VOL. XXXII NO.1 SPRING 1999

THE WHITE STATUE

I love you silent statue! for your sake
My songs in prayer upreach
Frail hands of flame-like speech
That some mauve-silver twilight you may wake!

I love you more than swallows love the south,
As sunflowers turn and turn
Towards the sun, I yearn
To press warm lips against your cold white mouth!

I love you more than scarlet skirted dawn,
At sight of whose spread wings
The great world wakes and sings;
Forgetful of the long, vague dark withdrawn.

I love you most at purple sunsetting:
When light with feverish eyes
Comes up the fading skies,
I love you with a passion past forgetting.

Olive Custance – *Opals (1897)*

Olive Eleanor Custance (1874-1944) the daughter of Col. Frederick Hambleton Custance was a great-great-granddaughter of Parson Woodforde's Squire Custance. She married Lord Alfred Douglas in 1902.

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EDITORIAL

In taking over the editorial duties performed for so long and with such real distinction by Roy Winstanley I feel much as Alfred Austin must have felt on succeeding Tennyson as poet laureate. But then, I remember that to Austin are attributed the immortal lines on the illness of the Prince of Wales:

> Along the electric wire the message came
> He is not better – he is much the same

and I realise that I rather flatter myself.

First a word of reassurance. Few objects of domestic utility are capable of striking such terror into the human breast as the new broom. Those, however, who fear structuralist approaches and post-feminist critiques need have no fear. Articles with titles such as "Du Quesne, Dialectic and Deconstruction" or "Will Coleman's Leap: 'My Great Pond', the Existential Void and Beyond" or "Decontextualising Parson Penny" are unlikely to be received with more enthusiasm here in the High Peak than they would have been in Halesowen. Which brings me back to Mr Winstanley. My ambition will be to maintain the standard which he has established: a standard characterised by accuracy, a fine sense of Woodfordean context and, not least endearingly, *readability*. All of us will be aware of the certainty with which he has steered this small but sturdy craft away from the both the Scylla of trivialisation and the Charybdis of sterile, jargon-ridden academicism. That it is possible for a journal such as this to be both intelligent and readable is something which, thanks to Roy, we take for granted. I hope that it will continue to be so.

Having frightened off the structuralists, I must hasten to add that contributions to the Journal are, of course, always welcome, and this might be an opportunity to remind members that our aim is "to extend and develop knowledge of James Woodforde's life *and the society in which he lived*" (my italics). There is, however, another way in which members could help. Not the least of Roy Winstanley's contributions to our enjoyment of the Journal has been the ingenuity with which he has chosen such a stimulating variety of cover illustrations with which to attract us to its contents. By submitting their own photographs, members can help in more ways than one. Miss Archer's fine representation of St Peter's, Ringland which appeared on the cover of the Winter 1996 Journal comes to mind as an example of what can be done. Not only is the

editor spared a certain amount of effort but, more importantly, our Society is saved a significant sum of money. The Portrait of William Windham III by Sir Joshua Reynolds on the cover of the current issue cost £24.63 for the image, post and packing and reproduction fee: more than the cost to members of Volume X of the Diary.

I am fortunate in being able to begin my time as editor with three especially good essays. Conscious of the fact that members attending this year's frolic will be visiting Felbrigg, Robin Gibson has provided us with a fascinating article on that agreeable man "Weathercock Windham". In that extraordinary year 1968, when what Nancy Woodforde might have called "Revolusion Clubs" were so active in Paris and elsewhere, in a quiet corner of Norfolk the nascent P.W.S. had its first Expedition. The events of that auspicious day were recorded on audio-tape by Sidney Quin and now David Case has produced a wonderfully evocative transcription. "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive", indeed! Finally, we come to Mr Gradgrind's star pupil Bitzer who knew exactly how to define a horse – "Quadruped. Graminivorous." etc – but, unlike "Girl number twenty", Sissy Jupe ("possessed of no facts in reference to one of the commonest animals!"), he knew nothing of horses and still less of humanity. At the end of Roy Winstanley's masterly essay, even the most un-Bitzerish horse-lover is likely to be a little more of a Sissy Jupe. Do enjoy your reading.

MARTIN BRAYNE
Editor

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

This Journal will precede the Society's AGM and Frolic by a few weeks. Looking back on earlier expeditions to Woodforde's Norfolk, I wonder if the elements have sufficient time to change from the cold, raw, blustery weather of today to the warm sunny weekends that we have enjoyed in past years. The Met Office cannot predict the state of affairs for May, but Society members can rely upon a well-planned and entertaining event. Meticulous planning by Phyllis Stanley has resulted in a well thought-out series of activities aimed at meeting the diverse range of interests of attendees. Even Phyllis's severely injured wrist has not thwarted the preparations, although David Case has kindly stepped in to assist her. Support to the event also comes from Ann and David Williams with their production of nametags, attendee lists, AGM and committee minutes. This Journal features a fascinating article on the very first Frolic; I hope you will join us this year in Norfolk, compare it with that first Frolic and enjoy the warm welcome awaiting both new and regular 'Frolickers'.

Members who are settling down to read this Journal may be further entertained by two new forthcoming Society publications. We are extremely grateful for the 65 members who ordered their copies of Volume X prior to printing; their package could have preceded this Journal's arrival on their doorstep by a day or two. New orders can be placed at any time and copies will also be available 'across the counter' at the Frolic. Our second publication due out in late 1999, and resulting from the combined efforts of Roy Winstanley and the Reverend Jameson, is Volume XI covering the years 1785-1787. This period has received scant attention in the past and members will find our good friend and companion, Woodforde, in fine form as he goes about his everyday but fascinating life. How fortunate we are to have members who bring Woodforde to us through the diary publications, the Journal and our annual Frolic.

NIGEL CUSTANCE
Chairman

ROY L. WINSTANLEY – AN APPRECIATION

In his final editorial (Journal XXXI, No. 4) Roy Winstanley claims, with characteristic modesty, that his work for our Society over the years entitles him to one-and-a-half cheers. Now this really will not do. For a period of well over a quarter of a century Roy, as editor, has almost personified the Parson Woodforde Society, and I speak here from my own experience as your one-time chairman. For a large part of that time I worked closely with him and so my knowledge is first-hand. No, no Roy, one-and-a-half cheers will not do; an abundance of cheers, a fanfare even, to celebrate triumphal achievement, is what is called for, and this from all lovers of Woodforde, Society members or not. Let me enlarge upon this. Over all this long period of years, with unfailing regularity our Journal, now an acknowledged and applauded publication, has appeared, vast sections of it written by Roy himself. And written, please note, in a fashion which combines style with erudition, adding enormously to our understanding of Woodforde and his times. Surely this is a major accomplishment.

Roy was kind enough to write, at the time I ceased to be your chairman, that in all our long association we had never exchanged a "cross word". Opportunities for such were, I suppose, most likely to have occurred during the many delays, difficulties and vicissitudes which accompanied the production of Roy's nine volumes of complete and unabridged diaries. Many hours were spent in long telephone discussions and in frequent correspondence. I can recall the anguish of last minute alterations, of spells of necessarily hasty proof-reading at inconvenient times, of problems over indexing and binding. Yet it is true, as Roy says, that all such details were resolved without any falling out, in our shared determination to see the volumes published. I do no more than give Roy his due when describing them as a monument to his untiring efforts to bring our diarist more fully to the attention of the reading public, and worthy to rank with the Latham & Matthews' Pepys. It is undeniably true now that no-one can think of Woodforde without coupling the name with that of Winstanley.

With the publication of the first biography of Parson Woodforde Roy achieved not only an ambition but the culmination of long years of dedicated research into the diarist's life and times. I am proud that I was able to assist in the arrangements for its appearance. Here, for the first time, is laid out for the general reader

and enthusiast alike a scholarly and eminently readable account of Woodforde's daily living, of his family and friends, of his domestic routines and of that fascinating trivia which is so often unrecorded. As the book becomes more widely known it will, I think, fulfil Roy's expressed hope that Woodforde will be given his rightful place as a chronicler of, and authority on, his times.

Roy has indeed served our Society well and in laying down the burden of editorship will, I hope, enjoy a respite. We are fortunate that we shall continue to enjoy the occasional contribution to the Journal and, of course, his continuing work on previously unpublished portions of the diary.

I cannot resist concluding this appreciation with a story the truth of which I can guarantee. I am, from time to time, approached by people with an enquiry about some specific diary or diarist. Some months ago in a telephone conversation with one such enquirer I was asked if I'd ever heard of Woodforde's diary. Before I could draw breath to answer the lady said, "I think it's by a man called Winstanley".

G.H.B.

WILLIAM WINDHAM OF FELBRIGG

William Windham was a notable politician in the late eighteenth century and although not an acquaintance of Woodforde he is mentioned several times in the diary as one of the local aristocrats and MPs (for Norwich). He was the only near neighbour of Woodforde who achieved some political eminence; he became a Cabinet Minister in the Government and owned one of the most splendid houses in Norfolk, at Felbrigg near Cromer. He was a colourful character and was a close friend of some of the most notable people of the eighteenth century.

In writing this essay I have referred to the entry about Windham in the Dictionary of National Biography but the main references are two books written by Robert Ketton-Cremer who was the last owner of the Windham home at Felbrigg and who bequeathed the estate to the National Trust. The two books are *The Early Life and Diaries of William Windham*, published 1930 by Faber & Faber,

and *Felbrigg, the Story of a House*, published in 1962 by Rupert Hart-Davis. A copy of the former book was kindly loaned to me by one of our members, Roy Creamer, and this is particularly interesting as it was presented by the author in October 1930 to John Beresford in acknowledgement of his kindness in allowing quotations from *The Diary of a Country Parson.*

Early Life and Parentage

Windham was born in 1750 and was therefore some ten years younger than Parson Woodforde. He was descended from a very old and illustrious family who had built the family house at Felbrigg in the early seventeenth century. (Earlier generations had also owned an estate at Felbrigg since the fifteenth century.) Two of William's ancestors had the same christian name and so the subject of this essay was sometimes known as William Windham III.

Windham's father was a Colonel in the Militia and his main claim to fame lay in writing an Army Manual of Drill which was published in 1759. It was regarded as one of the most elaborate and decorative training manuals ever produced and it was adopted by many of the militia regiments around the country.

Windham senior inherited Felbrigg on the death of his father in 1749 and soon afterwards he married his mistress, a widow Sarah Lukin, who had had three children by her first husband. William and Sarah's son and only child, young William, was born three months after the marriage and the family then settled at Felbrigg although they spent much time in London. Windham made major altertions to the interior of Felbrigg, employing such eminent people as James Paine and the plasterer Joseph Rose. The alterations reflected his taste as developed during his earlier "Grand Tour" of Europe and provided a setting for his collection of mainly Italian paintings, many of which still adorn the house.

In May 1757 William junior was entered at Eton when just seven years old. During the next three years his father was much engaged on his militia duties but soon after his health began to fade and he died as a result of consumption on 30 October 1761 at the early age of 44. At that time, young William was aged eleven and had been at Eton for four years. He was regarded as an outstanding athlete and also a very proficient scholar. Among his friends at Eton was the future Prime Minister, Charles James Fox, and there was an enduring friendship between them. Although William was the only child of both his parents, he had an older half-sister, Elizabeth, the

illegitimate daughter of his father, who had been largely disinherited because of an unacceptable husband.

Windham as a Young Man

Windham was a somewhat wayward youth who had to leave Eton when sixteen under threat of expulsion as he had been involved in some riots at the college. Later in the year he went to Glasgow University where he studied mathematics and developed a passion for the subject. Apparently, one of his pastimes was to multiply six figures by three figures in his head and then he recorded the time in which he achieved the result. He continued to have a great interest in mathematics during his lifetime.

After the year of exile in Scotland he went to Oxford as a gentleman commoner of University College, beginning his residence there in the Michaelmas Term of 1767. At that time the college had a high reputation for its scholarship and had several eminent men as Master and Fellows. One of these Fellows was Robert Chambers who was Windham's tutor. Chambers was a notable academic and Vinerian Professor of Law. One of his friends was Doctor Johnson who was a regular visitor to the college and this may be how Windham first made his acquaintance. Windham's most intimate friend at Oxford was George Chomondeley whose father, to the alarm of his family, had married the sister of the actress Peg Woffington.

Windham was a serious scholar and studied classical literature with such success that he might have become one of the foremost Greek scholars of his time. He took his degree and left Oxford around 1771 or 1772; he became MA in October 1782 and, much later, was granted the honorary degree of DCL in 1793. Apparently, Windham much enjoyed his time at Oxford and frequently returned to enjoy the peaceful atmosphere and the company of old friends at the college.

Windham and the Forrest family

At the time of leaving college Windham was regarded as one of the most promising men of his generation and yet he did not follow any set course for the next few years. He was completely indifferent to public affairs and declined an offer to become private secretary to his father's old friend Lord Townshend who was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. In May 1771 he came of age and entered on his large inheritance. His mother had not lived at Felbrigg during her son's

minority and subsequently continued to live at her house in London. One of her two sons, George Lukin, became Rector of Felbrigg and of two nearby villages and her elder son Robert was in the army.

Soon after coming down from Oxford, Windham became involved in a strange and emotional relationship. He and Cholmondeley became friendly with Mrs Juliana Forrest who lived with her six beautiful daughters in a large house in London. She was the widow of a naval officer and the daughter of a rich plantation owner in Jamaica. She was hopelessly extravagant and had frequent gay parties at her houses – she had another fine country house beside the Thames in Berkshire. Her extravagance eventually forced her to give up her London home and she lived more quietly at Binfield. Her elder daughter, Bridget, was married to the Hon. John Byng, later to become the fifth Viscount Torrington who wrote a series of travel books which are still much read today (The Torrington Diaries).

Windham became infatuated with Mrs Byng and this is much reflected in his personal diaries which he kept at intervals from 1772 onwards. She was also very fond of Windham but it was thought that she never betrayed her husband to whom she was deeply attached and by whom she had twelve children. It was indeed a most curious relationship in which Windham retained his friendship with Byng while expressing his love to Byng's wife. He spent a great amoung of time staying with the Byng family at their house at Ickleford, in Hertfordshire, often when Byng was away. When absent from Mrs Byng he would write frequently to her even when he was travelling around the country with Byng and Cholmondeley.

During this period he was sometimes attracted to other women, one of whom was alleged to be Mary Hickey, the sister of the memoir writer William Hickey. She was also a very close friend of Mrs Byng. His obsession with Mrs Byng continued unabated for several years. His diary up to the autumn of 1775 reveals clearly the depth of his emotions about Mrs Byng. Thereafter, his passion seems to have gradually subsided into a deep and lasting friendship.

His Early Political Career

Around 1777 he began to think seriously about a political career and he became closely connected with the group of young Whigs including Fox, Burke, Coke and Sheridan. At this time the British

were suffering major setbacks in the American war to which Windham was violently opposed. In order to rally support for the government, Lord Townshend convened a public meeting in Norwich in January 1778. On hearing this Windham hurried to Norfolk and determined to make strong and vocal opposition to the rally. He stayed at Felbrigg for a week or two to prepare his arguments and then attended the meeting on 28 January at the *Maid's Head* in Norwich.

This was the meeting which was attended by our Parson Woodforde and he fully reported the event in his diary as follows:

> Jan: 27 –
> . . . Mr. du Quesne called on me this morning and stayed with me some time; he told me that a meeting of the Nobility, Gentry, & Clergy of the County of Norfolk would be held to Morrow Morn' at the Maids Head at Norwich for opening a Subscription to advance a Regiment in these critical Times for the King – he asked me if I shall be there, which I promised – . . .

Woodforde travelled to Norwich that evening and slept at the *Kings Head*. He then walked down to the *Maids Head* to the meeting which was chaired by Sir John Wodehouse. After the chairman spoke in favour of the proposal he was answered by "one Mr. Windham who spoke exceeding well with great Fluency & Oratory, but on the wrong Side – Lord Townshend spoke after him but is no Orator at all".

Parson Woodforde subscribed five guineas for the proposal which raised nearly £5000 in all. Later in the same day there was another meeting of the opposing party at the *White Swan* and Woodforde reports that "most people admired the Manner of Mr. Windham's Speaking – so much Elegance, fluency and Action in it –".

Despite the protests, the war continued and, a few months later, war was declared against France. There was then a rumour of invasion by the French; the Militia were called out and Windham was involved as a major of the First Norfolk battalion. During their assignment in Suffolk, Windham bravely quelled a mutiny by some of the soldiers. Subsequently, he suffered from exposure after a soaking and he became very ill until the spring of 1779. While convalescing during the summer of that year he toured the west country and did not rejoin the militia. By the autumn his health was not completely restored and he decided to make an extended tour on the continent which lasted until September 1780.

On his return to England he found that there was a general election pending and he had been nominated in his absence as a candidate for Norwich. He arrived at that town only two days before polling day. As he was comparatively unknown to the electorate it was perhaps not unexpected that he should finish bottom of the poll. However, he scored a respectable number of votes and had made his mark as an impressive candidate.

Felbrigg Hall

After the election Windham retired to Felbrigg where he had a long visit by Mr and Mrs Byng and two of the Forrest sisters. Although Windham had not spent much time there, the house and estate had been well managed. Some years earlier, the house had been visited by Lady Beauchamp Proctor* in 1764 when she described it as being "a very grand looking old house with a good view of the sea, great variety of ground and the situation as good if not better than any of the seats in Norfolk".

At this time, the estate grounds were being managed by Nathaniel Kent, well known for his books on agriculture and estate management. *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property* was published in 1775 shortly after his appointment at Felbrigg. The management of the house was under William Cobb from 1777 and he served Windham as his Steward for the next fifteen years. During his frequent absences from Felbrigg much was devolved on his managers to ensure that the estate was run efficiently. When Windham went abroad in 1779 the greater part of the kitchen garden was sown with turnips with a view to economy by reducing labour and the herd of deer was gradually sold or killed.

Coincidentally, Humphry Repton, later to become the famous landscape gardener, was a near neighbour at Felbrigg and Windham made him his private secretary when he was appointed Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland early in 1782. But this job lasted only a few months as Windham disliked the work and his health began to suffer. He resigned in July while on a visit to England and did not return to Ireland but left Repton to deputize for him until a new Secretary was appointed.

On 1 January 1784 Windham began to write his regular diaries which lasted until his death; these were published in 1866 by Mrs Henry Baring.

* She was the stepmother of Mrs Custance.

Friendship with Samuel Johnson

In March 1774, there was a General Election to follow Pitt's appointment as Prime Minister. The Whigs did badly in this election and Fox only narrowly kept his seat at Westminster. Despite this tide Windham succeeded in being returned as one of the two members for Norwich and his political career had at last begun.

From that time he lived much in London. For amusement he went often to the theatre and became very friendly with the famous actress, Mrs Siddons. He also spent much time with Doctor Johnson, becoming one of his closest friends. No doubt Windham's scholarship and fluency in conversation appealed to Johnson and there developed an almost paternal relationship. (After Johnson's visit Windham said to Fanny Burney that "I felt a mixed fondness and reverence growing so strong upon me that I am satisfied the closest union would have followed his longer life.") In the winter of 1783 Johnson instituted a new Club and Windham became one of its privileged few members.

Towards the end of 1784. Johnson's health was deteriorating rapidly and Windham did all he could to assist Johnson in the last weeks of his life. He took him about in his carriage and visited him frequently at his home at Bolt Court. Windham also left his servant to sit up with Johnson during the last night of his life. Windham then played a leading part in organizing the funeral of the great man at Westminster Abbey, at which he was a pall bearer. In his Will Johnson bequeathed some of his books to Windham and these are still in the library at Felbrigg.

The Politician

During the next few years Windham spoke occasionally from the opposition benches but did not achieve any prominence in parliament. He enjoyed his occasional visits to Felbrigg where he spent much time at the local parsonage with his half-brother's family. He also engaged the notable architect William Brettingham to carry out a considerable programme of work, mainly on the interior of the house.

He was greatly perturbed by the French Revolution and, when France declared war on England in 1793, Windham advocated a vigorous prosecution of the war in opposition to his Whig colleagues. He also gave his general support to the government and

in July 1794 he was appointed Secretary at War with a seat in Pitt's Cabinet.

After his appointment, Windham had to apply for re-election and he had a rough passage in the campaign. The electors of Norwich were a large and independently minded group of the freemen and the war was not generally popular as it had a bad effect on Norwich trade. Furthermore, Windham's change of allegiance from a liberal-minded Whig to coalition with the Tory administration did not please the people. Although he won the election on 12 July it was a very noisy affair with some mob rowdyism. When Windham was chaired in the evening a stone was thrown at him but he avoided it and jumped down to seize the culprit and hand him to an officer.

Windham remained Secretary at War for seven years and achieved a creditable record in improving the pay and welfare of the soldiers. But he was not successful in his operational actions. In the summer of 1795 he dispatched a force to France in support of the Royalists but the attempt ended in defeat and massacre. Despite this setback he continued to believe that France should be invaded and opposed suggestions for a negotiated peace.

Marriage

Up to 1794 Windham had been suffering from moods of indecision and anxiety but the war with France shook him out of this state and he developed more firmness of mind. Although busy with his government role he still maintained his contact with literary friends, including Boswell, Malone and George Steevens. Yet he was a rather lonely man and although he had many female acquaintances there was no close attachment. He retained his friendly relations with the Forrest family and one of the Forrest daughters, Cecilia, had been intimately involved with Windham's good friend Cholmondeley. However, in 1790 he jilted her and then married another woman, Marcia Pitt. Windham much disapproved of Cholmondeley's conduct and his own affection for Cecilia gradually grew over the next few years.

In the early summer of 1798 Windham asked Cecilia to marry him. They were married in the church at Binfield in Berkshire and John Byng was his best man. The marriage had been kept secret and came as a surprise to his friends who perhaps thought of him as a confirmed bachelor.

The marriage to Cecilia proved to be very happy. They visited Felbrigg occasionally but spent much time in Bath to see their

friends, especially his half-brother William Lukin who, with help from Windham, had been appointed Dean of Wells in February 1799. He must have been living very well as, in common with other pluralists, he still retained his Norfolk livings.

Some comments about the estate and house at Felbrigg were recorded in the summer of 1797 when the Gurney sisters (of the famous Quaker family) visited Felbrigg. Louisa Gurney writes that they were led:

> . . . to the most delightful park I ever saw in my life. He took us to the house and knocked at the door for a servant to show us over it. . . . We looked over the house. I never saw such a place nor such fine rooms. They were full of the most delightful pictures. . . . The young gentleman who showed us the house was Master Lukin. (This was John, the son of William Lukin.)

In 1801 Pitt and some of his ministers, including Windham, resigned because they could not get approval for the emancipation of Catholics in Ireland. Later in the same year there was a peace treaty with France and Windham became generally unpopular by his strong condemnation of the peace. While his conviction was admired, few agreed with him, and when parliament was dissolved in 1802 he faced a hard struggle to be re-elected. He was narrowly defeated in the election after having served the city for eighteen years, but was then offered a safe seat in the Cornish pocket borough of St Mawes.

"Weathercock Windham"

The peace with France did not last long and war was again declared in May 1803. Windham then began to busy himself with the defence of the Norfolk coast against the threat of invasion. In 1804 Pitt returned to take charge of the government but Windham would not join him without his friend Fox. After returning his allegiance to Fox, Windham's changes of heart were rewarded by being given the name of "Weathercock Windham" and this term clung to him henceforth.

After Pitt's death in 1806, Windham surprisingly opposed the plan to give him a public funeral and monument in Westminster Abbey. Apparently he was upset that a public funeral had not been given to his friend Burke. However, the proposal was carried with a large majority and Windham redeemed himself somewhat by supporting the grant of up to £40,000 for paying Pitt's debts. In the new government Windham was re-appointed as Secretary for War and

the Colonies and during that time he introduced a new scheme for army recruitment. However, this appointment lasted little more than a year when the government fell.

At the following general election Windham's seat in Cornwall was not available and he decided to stand for one of the two county seats for Norfolk. He was successful largely, it was reputed, because of the strong support of his fellow candidate Thomas Coke of Holkham Hall, who had very great prestige in the county. However, as a result of allegations of bribery and corruption, a petition to unseat the candidates succeeded. Windham was then fortunate in finding another pocket borough at New Romney in Kent and he took his seat for that place. Thereafter his political career declined; he did not again hold office and although he had been offered a peerage he preferred to remain in the House of Commons. At the election of 1807 he was again provided with a seat for the pocket borough of Higham Ferrers in Northamptonshire.

The Last Years

During the last few years of his life he spent much more time at Felbrigg but his health was declining. In July of 1809 he was injured when he tried to help a friend preserve his household when a fire broke out nearby. During the subsequent year he suffered from the result of his injuries and had an operation in May 1810 at his house in Pall Mall. He did not recover from the effects of the pain and shock of the operation and died some three weeks later on 4 June 1810.

Several portraits were made of Windham: by Hoppner and Lawrence, and a head by Reynolds is in the National Portrait Gallery (see cover). There is a copy of Lawrence's portrait at Felbrigg Hall and also a pastel by James Hamilton.

In the many impressions of Windham given by political acquaintances he was recorded with mixed emotions varying between admiration and exasperation. His own definition of himself was as "a scholar among politicians and a politician among scholars". Among other circles he was generally well liked and Fanny Burney wrote that he was a most agreeable person and a brilliant conversationalist.

Windham's widow, Cecilia, lived for a further fourteen years and died in 1824, aged 74. William bequeathed Felbrigg and all his possessions to his widow for her life, but as she was childless

Windham was the last of his line; this ended the hereditary succession of Windhams over three hundred and fifty years.

After Cecilia's death, the estate passed to William Lukin, the elder son of Windham's half-brother, the Dean of Wells. This son became a distinguished Admiral and after retirement he settled in the Felbrigg Parsonage until he acquired the estate. He then changed his name to Windham and set about making the last major changes to the house. He had planned to make drastic alterations which would have almost doubled its size but the cost was beyond his means and, apart from some modifications to the exterior and the erection of a new stable block, there were no changes to the interior of the house, which remained then and now much as it had been at the end of the eighteenth century.

Note

More information about the Norwich politicians including Windham was written by Roy Winstanley in his essay 'Eighteenth Century Politics – Windham and Norwich' which was published in Journal XXI, 1, Spring 1988.

THIRTY YEARS AGO . . . VOICES FROM THE PAST

In 1997, as we approached the thirtieth anniversary of the Society's foundation in 1998, I attempted to summarize the early history of the Society in an article for the Journal.[1,2] This included brief comments on the very first meeting of the Society which took place on 6 July 1968. A contemporary report on this meeting appeared in the Journal of the same year.[3] Recently, knowing of my interest in our history, Martin Brayne kindly drew my attention to the fact that we have a tape in our archives which records in words and sounds some of the events of that day in July 1968. I listened to this tape and was fascinated to hear, not just the spoken words, but the church bells, the bird song in the background, and the footsteps in Weston church. I contemplated making a complete transcription of the spoken commentary for the Journal but soon realised that this would occupy an overabundance of space. I have therefore attempted to extract just some of the material on the tape; those who may regard me in the same dubious light as our friend John

Beresford, for just making a selection from the material, are welcome to borrow the complete tape! In what follows, brackets [] are used to insert my own extra words to link or clarify the text where appropriate and [?] signifies that I am unsure of an indistinct word or of its spelling.

The tape recording was made by Mr Sidney Quin (who would later become the Chairman of our Society in 1974). After the sound of church bells, his hushed and measured voice tells us that:

> You are listening to the church bells of Weston Longville church in Norfolk at the start of the first meeting of the Parson Woodforde Society at Weston Longville. As we sit here in the church the youngest member of the Woodforde family is just at this moment walking up the aisle with some pink roses to lay on the tomb of Parson Woodforde.

We learn later that this was Miss Wendy Woodforde.[4] *Mr Quin* continues:

> The Rector of Weston Longville is here and he is about to start the proceedings by reciting to us all the Prayer of Parson Woodforde – and here it is.

We now hear the deep sonorous voice of the *Reverend Mr Wynne Roach*[5]:

> Lord – by whom all souls lived – we thank thee for those whom thy love has called – the life of trial, the life of rest. We trust them to thy care. We pray thee by thy grace we may be brought to enjoy[?] with them, in this life of glory.

The words are not distinct and my transcript may not be totally accurate; however, I quote the prayer as I have not heard it before; indeed I had no idea that there was a "prayer of Parson Woodforde".

The Reverend Mr Wynne Roach welcomes the Parson Woodforde Society members and points out that interest in Woodforde had been long-standing in the parish – "You would wish to know I'm sure that the interest in Parson Woodforde did not arise when this Society [was] started". He then gives a fairly detailed history of the church, first quoting from a letter dated 1885 from a former Rector I. G. Sewell, to "My Dear Egerton". This noted, *inter alia*, that Weston Longville together with Witchingham was granted by King Henry VI to New College in about 1440. Wynne Roach notes that the list of known rectors goes back to 1229, sixty years earlier than the list which appears in the church. He draws attention to "the top step of the font":

You will see that it is a crucifix – a stone crucifix ... apparently a Saxon crucifix [once] in the churchyard here at Weston Longville. How it came there, when it came there, we don't know, but it's there now and there it stays.

He next draws attention to the mediaeval screen – which he believed to have been pulled down at the time of Elizabeth I – and then at some later date:

... rebuilt, replaced, very amusingly – because the end of the Latin sentence – across the top, ends in the middle, so they put the two sections [of the screen] over [the wrong way]. That's a lovely screen and I think it will merit your attention ... its age is made clear to us by the decorations ... running up the side pieces ... flowers that were meant in those days to represent the Trinity.

He next describes the mural paintings – the Tree of Jesse "unearthed before the War, in 1938 ... by Professor Tristram" who appears to have been brought to this part of the world by the need for work on the organ in Norwich following a fire in the Cathedral.

But unfortunately, according to Mrs E. Baker who is now the authority on these matters, he put wax over the painting to preserve it. Consequently, the painting breathed unevenly.

He then draws attention to the pews – "the horse-boxes" whose great age is apparently denoted by the hinges:

... we had an architect here and he said "Good Heavens no, you can't take these pews away – they're genuine".

But we are not told any more about the age of the pews or just what can be learnt from the hinges!

Then on the wall at the back of the church we also have the framed portrait of Parson Woodforde which was given to us anonymously ... and has been cleaned twice ... The Bishop's Registrar, Mr Prior, granted his faculty so that we could have Parson Woodforde constantly watching our actions.

The Reverend Mr Wynne Roach draws attention to a second mediaeval wall painting (fifty years older than the Jesse Vine) uncovered by Mrs E. Baker and found to have an older plaster base –

... and that plaster, believe it or not – there is nothing new under the sun so they tell us – that plaster was mixed with skimmed milk to give it its almost plastic quality. Attention is drawn to the "very beautiful brass of Elizabeth Rookwood" and to two books, "a black-letter copy of Bishop Jewel's Apology and the Erasmus Paraphrase – two of the first books that were ever published in print".

And then we have Squire Custance's register which he presented to Parson Woodforde in 1785 ... and a copy of the first – and as far as I know the only copy still in existence of what was evidently the first industrial census in this country ... and this magnificent man James Woodforde – he makes out an *exact* copy of the questions that were asked ... to hand it on to his successors ... We found this copy ... ten to fifteen years ago in the back of an old book as we were searching through old documents here and you may remember there was a broadcast about this particular sheet of paper ... which I am sure you will look at because it contains Parson Woodforde's writing.

To be exact – the Custance Register was presented in 1783 – diary for 20 February: "M^{r}. Custance sent by Nancy to me this Evening a very handsome Register ...". The census referred to must be the 1801 census for Weston – which is now in the Norfolk Record Office. The names contained in it were discussed in an article in our Journal[6] but I was unaware that it had been the subject "of a broadcast".

The voice of *Sidney Quin* takes over:

After a look round the treasures put out for us by the Rector we left the church and wandered outside under a windy Norfolk sky, really amongst the ghosts of the past, looking at familiar names from the diary on the tombstones of long ago. Canon Wilson[7] gathered us together around the grave of Squire Custance and then he took up the tale:

Canon Wilson:

Mrs Custance is the widow of the last of the male line of the Squire's family. Her own husband is buried just here. I am very grateful to Mrs Coughtrey for having so beautifully restored *this* grave.

Mr Quin:

Mrs Custance having put flowers on the Custance grave, you heard her footsteps just now, we then wandered through the churchyard gate over to the Old Hart – that was the pub mentioned in the diary, and perhaps in our companionship, recaptured the spirit of those long distant years ... It is now a private house over which members were shown by its owner Miss Stella Bradshaw. She and her friends also kindly provided us with refreshments and we were able to drink a toast to those who must have made the old pub ... echo with laughter in bygone days.

We left the Hart in our various horseless carriages and the idea was that we should then proceed to Weston Old Hall. Some of us

got lost in the process but nevertheless we *did* get there in the end ... Weston Old Hall was, as we know, the home of the Custance family and now belongs to Mr and Mrs Peter Sayer who allowed us to roam over the house and grounds ... and it was a real joy to see something of this delightful house. We were told that portions of the house belonged to the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The scene then shifts to the site of Weston House and Mrs Clutsom who is introduced by Canon Wilson. *Mrs Clutsom*:

The present house that you see was originally of course the coach houses and stables. The original Weston House was out on the lawn further over there ... The only structural building we did to the stables and coach house were the addition of the front porch and the bay windows, otherwise it is all the original brickwork ... You will see that it is built around a courtyard – we grassed that down of course when we came here ... At that time Mr Dewing owned the place. He didn't live here, the shooting was let to a syndicate and he just had his keeper living here in just a couple of rooms. When we came here ... the original house had been demolished and there were just the cellars left which were in rather a dangerous condition. We *did* restore one of them and during the war that was used as an air-raid shelter. During the war the stables and coach houses were used for storing chocolate and sugar and various foodstuffs by the War Office. In 1948 the Old House where Mr Sayer now lives came on the market ... but we didn't want to live there because it wasn't on the Park; it seemed so wrong to live outside the Park gates ... then my husband ... said "I don't know why we want to build a house – we could convert this" ... the conversion took four and a half years [and] we moved in here in 1952. The old ice-house is still in existence and is in very good condition.

The scene now moves to Hockering. *Canon Wilson*:

Now here's the reading – those that wish to listen may do so – April 7th 1778:

'My Nephew and self took a Walk about 11. this morning to M^{r}. Howes's'.

[He] lived in this part of the house which dates back to the Elizabethan period ...

'... & there we dined and spent the Afternoon with him & his Wife, M^{r}. Bodham, and M^{r}. and Miss Donne'.

and we've Miss Barham Johnson here – she has to put up her hand – who is the descendant of this very famous family of Donnes, Cowper, Bodham, and Johnsons. Let us go on:

'We spent the afternoon in fishing M^r^. Howes' pond. I lent him my large drag Net, and my Cart carried it over for him – And Harry Dunnel, Will & Ben went with the same'.

The diary account is continued[8] with the results of the fishing expedition and an exchange of fishy presents followed by the detailed account of the following meal at Mr Howes'. Canon Wilson then explains his fears that so many houses of this kind risked being demolished. "Very few people know of the existence of this house because it is hidden away from the road and as Hockering plays such an important part in the diaries I thought you would like to see it."

There follows a move to Mattishall church, and the narrative is taken up by the deep voice of the incumbent there, *Dr Thorne*:

I don't think there is very much for people connected with Parson Woodforde to see here except that he appears to have been a very strong friend of the Reverend John Smith, ex Fellow of Caius College Cambridge, who was the vicar here from 1781 until 1803. This church has always been connected ... with Caius College since the Middle Ages ... only four of its thirty-six incumbents have not been members of the College I believe ... When Smith was here ... Parson Woodforde had a considerable amount of trafficking with Mattishall and even with the transport of the time it wasn't a very long distance to come ... It is I believe authenticated that Mr Woodforde *did* preach at times from that Jacobean pulpit. At that time it hadn't got that huge board over. The huge board was on legs in what is now the Lady chapel ... and was used for church wardens to put their hats on and count the collection ...!

I shouldn't think this church was anything like in such good condition 150 years ago, in fact the south aisle I believe was very nearly falling down. But the things you *want* to see ... in this lovely building are the memorial to Mr Bodham and his wife, the floor tomb of John Smith, and the pulpit ... Next to [the Bodham's memorial] is the wall memorial to the Donnes who were another local family at that time.

The rector went off to get out the eighteenth century registers, and after his presentation Canon Wilson reminds him that Miss Barham Johnson was present – a descendant of the Bodham family mentioned.

Canon Wilson:

Just one other point – I think some ... will be interested to know – Archbishop Parker, the first Archbishop who took to himself a

wife, the first Archbishop in Elizabethan times, was married in this church.

The Rector:

Mrs Parker came from the ancient house behind the butcher's shop here. Her name was Mary Harleston and the old peoples' flats are called Harleston after her and the Council houses road is Parker Road. She went to Lambeth Palace presumably with a strong Norfolk dialect and got herself established there to the disgust of Queen Elizabeth the first, who didn't want [?] her.[9]

We then move on to Mattishall to the house of Thomas Bodham.
Canon Wilson:

I'll talk about the house in a moment but whenever we read in the diary of Nancy and the Parson coming to Mattishall it is to *this* house because this is where Thomas Bodham lived. It's called on maps South Close or sometimes Mattishall Hall ... Woodforde and Nancy very often came here and Nancy very often stayed. Now – Miss Barham Johnson – will you speak a little about it?

Miss Barham Johnson then gives a long and detailed description of the architecture of the house and information about the owners, of which the following is a condensation:

Miss Barham Johnson (having at times to compete with a dog barking excitedly in the background):

Recently, when [the house] was being modernised, the gentleman doing it told me that he thinks the kitchen – which would [correspond to] the bottom two windows ... was the original cottage. We've got documents going back to Henry VIII's reign of all this property and the earliest ... calls it a cottage ... If you go into the kitchen you'll find it's got much thicker walls than the rest ...

There follows a detailed discussion of the shapes of the gables and what these may signify.

While the Bodhams were here they *did* add one room I know because I have a letter from Aunt Donne saying "Why do you want to add another room? It's a perfectly good house" – which room they added I have not yet been able to discover.

It belonged to a family called Blyth for many generations. When they were left with only a daughter – she married a Chamberlayne. It passed into the family of Chamberlayne and it came down to one called Colvie Chamberlayne. He had only a daughter and she married Mr Bodham of Watton – merchant grocer – and I don't think they ever lived in it. Mrs Chamberlayne stayed here as a widow and the Bodhams lived in

Swaffham ... When she died, Thomas Bodham who had just come down from Cambridge – he was a Fellow of Caius – came to live here at the time when Mr Donne had become the curate. In the unpublished parts of the diary you have Woodforde's first visit; Mr Donne went to call on *him* and then he came to one of these parties at Mr Donne's with Mrs Donne who was 'very keen on cards indeed' ... I know that Miss Donne had her eye on Mr Bodham, how seriously one can't tell, from the time she was 17 and it was 15 years before she married him. My theory is that he was a Fellow and Fellows in those days of course were not allowed to marry ... He was curate of Brandon Parva but he was never ordained priest ... In the unpublished parts of the diary you have Mr Woodforde saying how he went over to Brandon to administer the Sacrament for Mr Bodham ... and was horrified that there were only nine people in church ... I always feel Beresford wasn't very interested in the church side of Woodforde's life ...

Mr Bodham ... would never make up his mind to anything – well he never made up his mind to give up his Fellowship and marry Anne Donne for fifteen years! ... Nancy's diary letters give a description of coming here for the wedding visit – for which Mrs Bodham was dressed in pink brocade gown and coat edged with ermine with a gauze apron with two flounces and painted ribbons in her gauze cap and white shoes with silver buckles. Mr Bodham[10] puts that 'they were very elegantly dressed' ... She [Mrs Bodham] went on living here after he died, with her niece, the little Anne in the diary, and when her niece married she gave them this [house] and she moved off to Swaffham ... But in her old age she came back to live with Anne's son who was my great grandfather ... my grandfather and uncles and aunts were all born here ... [The house] had been in my family from the time it was built I should think, right down to 1914.

Canon Wilson:

Thank you very much Miss Barham Johnson.

Voice in the background:

Could we demand an unexpurgated edition of the diary?

Miss Barham Johnson:

It's such a pity they haven't republished the first volume complete because there's a lot in it which is very interesting. It's in the Bodleian if anyone wants to read it ... it's perfectly lovely.

So on to Berries Hall and we hear the voice of *Canon Wilson* again:

This is the home of Du Quesne ... the downstairs part at any rate

was built in Du Quesne's time and probably the upper part at the back ... was the part added by Mellish.[11] It was the vicarage of East Tuddenham and Honingham right up till 1908 ...

Now the present owners ... very charming people, who will welcome us and show us inside, are Mr and Mrs Meynell and strange to say *he* is a link with Du Quesne. Du Quesne's mother was the sister of Sir John Haigh of Bradshaigh [pronounced 'Bradshaw'] and she had a sister who was married to the Earl of Crawford and Belcarres and Mr Mellish[12] comes down from that line. [Mr and] Mrs Meynell – I think between them – they're linked to the aristocracy of most of the country.

There follows a list of the Meynells' aristocratic relationships – probably much to their embarrassment at the time I should imagine. Attention is then drawn to the nearby river Tud, the "pond where they fished", and the aged trees in the grounds. "Mr Meynell is quite an authority on trees – that is his great hobby and interest".

We next hear the welcoming voice of *Mrs Meynell* who is very modest about what there is to see:

The first time we opened the gardens ...on the way back people stopped and asked "Now can you tell us where the garden is?" So, since then we haven't dared show the garden!

Canon Wilson:

Might I dare say one thing – you will remember in the diaries how Mr Du Quesne brought over to Parson Woodforde a gift of strawberries soon after he came[13] – now this morning, early, Mrs Meynell went out to gather roses from here which were laid by Miss Wendy Woodforde on Parson Woodforde's grave – so we have repeated history in a way.[14]

The party was then clearly free to visit the house and gardens and we next hear a concluding resumé of the day from *Sidney Quin*:

Well, that really finishes my recording of our day at Weston Longville. But you will remember that after we left Berries Hall we all went back to Weston Longville and had a delightful tea in the village hall and I thought it was an excellent conclusion to what all of us felt had been a well-worthwhile day. I must apologise for much of this recording. Some of it has come out fairly well but a great deal of it was taken in the open air in rather difficult surroundings – certainly not in studio conditions. So you must accept it for what it is. Certainly nobody reheared their parts and this I think helps in the informality.

Whatever its shortcomings, this recording gives us a charming insight into the very first gathering of the new Parson Woodforde Society of 1968. What a great deal they accomplished in a single day! Not *all* of their visits are covered by the recording as it is clear from the abbreviated report of the time[3] that they also, for example, visited East Tuddenham church and passed by the Old Rectory at Weston, the journeys accomplished in a cavalcade of cars. These spoken words, captured for us by Mr Sidney Quin, seem well worth preserving in print and I for one would be interested to learn more about "the prayer of Parson Woodforde", the Saxon cross incorporated into the font at Weston,[15] the flowers on the screen "that were meant to represent the Trinity", and those hinges on the pews ... Perhaps further explanations may be offered in the future pages of our Journal?

Postscript

Having completed this article I asked one of our members, the Reverend Mr Brian Pateman, if he had heard of "the prayer of Parson Woodforde". He wrote to advise me that he had not previously known the prayer but had now identified it; the prayer can be found in a collection entitled 'A Chain of Prayer Across the Ages' by Selina F. Fox, first published 1913 (fifth edition reprinted 1930 by Wm Clowes & Sons). On page 267, headed 'A Death in the Home', prayer 6 reads as follows:

> O Lord, by whom all souls live; we thank Thee for those whom Thy love has called from the life of trial to the life of rest. We trust them to Thy care; we pray Thee that by Thy grace we may be brought to enjoy with them the endless life of glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Source not found)

This is clearly the prayer used by Wynne Roach albeit with some minor changes. The Reverend Pateman suggests that Mr Wynne Roach had a copy of this collection of prayers and was in the habit of using this particular prayer on the anniversary of Woodforde's death and at meetings of the Society. I am very grateful to the Reverend Pateman for his knowledgeable advice and invaluable help in this matter. In conclusion, I find it intriguing that it was Mr Quin who spontaneously called this "the prayer of Parson Woodforde" and did so on the occasion of the first meeting of the Society – but perhaps Wynne Roach had explained beforehand what was to come.

Notes and references

1. Journal XXX, 2, 4.
2. I am happy to report that, much to my surprise, I received not a single word of correction or modification to the early history which I had drawn together.
3. Journal I, 3, 7.
4. The daughter (now Mrs W. Fletcher) of the late Mr Oliver Heighes Woodforde.
5. The Reverend J. E. Wynne Roach was Rector at Weston Longville from 1949 until his death in 1971 (see also ref 1 above).
6. Journal XIV, 3, 8 and XIV, 4, 55. It is strange that Wynne Roach should refer to this as an 'industrial' census. The census of 1801 was the first of the decennial population enumerations. Very few copies of the returns for this data have survived. It should be noted that this piece of paper allows us the extraordinary benefit of knowing the names of all the heads of households in Weston at that time and the numbers in each house – simply because Stephen Andrews, who collected the information, set out these details on the back. This was not strictly necessary but it presumably assisted him in adding up the totals required!
7. Canon Wilson was of course the founder of the Society and its first Chairman (see ref 1). He had undoubtedly done most of the work in organising this first meeting in Norfolk.
8. I have followed Canon Wilson's words here, together with the spelling from the diary. However, Canon Wilson was not altogether precise, for example the published transcript of the diary has "My Nephew *Bill* took a Walk ..." and "We spent the *forenoon* in fishing ...".
9. Elizabeth I is said to have the following remark to the Archbishop's wife, the Queen disapproving of marriage among the clergy: "Madam I may not call you; mistress I am ashamed to call you; and so I do not know what to call you; but howsoever, I thank you" (Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, O.U.P., 1996). The Dictionary of National Biography states that the Archbishop was married 24 June 1547 to *Margaret* the daughter of Robert Harleston, gentleman of Mattishall.
10. These words are elsewhere attributed to Parson Woodforde – see ref 3 above.
11. Edward Mellish succeeded Du Quesne, being appointed to the livings of Honingham and East Tuddenham in 1794 (Journal XVI, 1, 11).
12. Does he mean Meynell (not Mellish)? I have taken the spellings here from the Journal (I, 4, 8) and once again I think Canon Wilson may have had his facts confused. In the Journal article it is stated that "Du Quesne's mother was Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Roger Bradshaigh, 2nd Baronet, of Haigh in Lancashire".
13. Diary: 11 July 1776: "M^{r}. Du Quesne sent over a Present of some Strawberries – I signed a Testimonium for him as he is going to be installed into his new Preferment, that of Chancellor Canon of S^{t}. Davids".
14. It may not be well known that the Society continues to have flowers laid on Woodforde's grave on each anniversary of his death.
15. A *Guide to All Saint's Church, Weston Longville* (1995) indicates that "the oldest feature inside the church is a Saxon stone calvary, encased in the step on the west side of the font".

> I owned "that the *Houyhnhnms*, among us, whom we called horses, were the most generous and comely animals we had; that they excelled in strength and swiftness: and when they belonged to persons of quality, were employed in travelling, racing, or drawing chariots: they were treated with much kindness and care, till they fell into diseases, or became foundered in the feet: but then they were sold, and used to all kinds of drudgery till they died; after which their skins were stripped, and sold for what they were worth, and their bodies left to be devoured by dogs and birds of prey. But the common race of horses had not so good fortune, being kept by farmers and carriers, and other mean people, who put them to greater labour, and fed them worse". I described, as well as I could our way of riding; the shape and use of a bridle, a saddle, a spur, and a whip; of harness and wheels. I added, "that we fastened plates of a certain hard substance, called iron, at the bottoms of their feet, to preserve their hoofs from being broken by the stony ways on which we often travelled".
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> – Jonathan Swift: 'A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms' in *Gulliver's Travels*, 1726 Penguin Illustrated Classics (1938)

Even in its most advanced communities, pre-industrial society was as totally dependent upon horses as ours is dominated by the powered vehicle, for all forms of transport and traction. They could carry and draw loads which, because of their much superior physical strength, were far more efficiently dealt with than the human muscle of primitive people could ever have achieved. Without them, it is impossible even to imagine the economy of a relatively sophisticated civilisation, like that of Western Europe in the eighteenth century, being possible. In its more purely social role, the horse was also a determinant of class, or at least of comparative degrees of wealth. Those who could afford to, rode; the rest walked, carrying their bundles and baggage with them as well as they were able. Here we might glance for a moment with the eye of sympathetic imagination at the forlorn figure of poor Mary Woods, the Parson's discharged former cook, revealed, after long denying her condition, at seven months pregnant, as she trudged away with her load to another parish. An unwonted meanness, surely, on the master's part. He could so easily have ordered out one of the carts, of which he owned a number at this time, with Ben Leggett to drive it for her. But he made no move to offer her a lift, possibly because he was cross with her, judging that

she did not deserve favourable treatment, for having allowed herself to become enceinte, so depriving her employer of his skilled food-provider. My point is that ordinary people made use of the amenities belonging to the rich only as loans and by consent. This does not happen today, or only in the case of the most luxurious motor cars. Access to all the rest is so common that I personally belong to a tiny, depressed fraction of the population, as I often reflect while waiting in the rain at the bus-stop and observing the pampered motorists flash by at their usual excessive speeds.

In Woodforde's day horses of all kinds were ubiquitous, serving mankind for so long as they lived, and afterwards. Leather was one of those indispensible natural commodities which were of immense value at a time when artificial substitutes were still unknown. As the famous Andover workhouse scandal tells us, the bones of horses were smashed up to make glue. Horsehair was used in furniture. The first gift of Press Custance to the newly arrived rector was "half a dead Horse" to feed his greyhounds.

But of one thing we can be very sure. People of Woodforde's day were not in the least romantic or sentimental in their attitude to the horses of which they made such perpetual and universal use. They were quite plainly beasts of burden, and really had far less thought bestowed upon them than many a car-owner lavishes on his peripatetic assemblage of dead machinery. If a wise equestrian refrained from abusing his horse, it was for the same reason that a sensible slave-owner did not behave cruelly to the human chattels he owned: he was disinclined to risk economic loss by unnecessary damage to his property. Even allowing for this mitigating factor, it was a society often ferociously cruel to animals, horses among the rest, with a heartlessness that was all the worse for being unrecognised, and accepted as part of the normal order of things. Of a stag hunt at Windsor* it was said that it lasted six hours and "the stag dropped dead before the hounds: several horses died in the field, and tired ones were seen crawling away to every village". This murderous affair was no doubt celebrated as "a good day's sport". Less bizarrely, in a general way, horses were overworked and overdriven at their owners' convenience.

The young Woodforde was knowledgeable about horses. Living at home with his parents, he earned a modest but quite useful income by acting as an amateur horse-doctor, for which prowess he

* Christopher Hibbert: *George III* (1998).

acquired more than a local reputation, to judge from the number of horses brought to him for treatment from outside his native parish. They seem largely to have been treated by bleeding, in accordance with the old medical lore which held as an article of faith that a presumed excess of blood in the body must be dangerous alike to human beings and domestic animals although I have never heard of the same treatment being given to a dog or cat, probably because they were considered less important in the scheme of things.

In our day, people outside the narrow boundaries of the stable and the racecourse are not expected to know anything like so much about the horse as about motorized vehicles, and probably imagine, if they give the matter any thought at all, that one horse was as good as another over any distance. As a young man riding about the countryside in the eighteenth century, it was vitally important for the diarist to know just what his mount for the occasion was capable of. Remember the conversation between the young David Copperfield and Mr Barkis, in which the carrier, responding to the boy's innocent question, whether he intended to drive his cart all the way to London from Suffolk, exlaimed: "Why, that horse would be deader than pork afore he got over half the ground!" Accounts of horseback journeys in Woodforde are found in the very earliest phase of the diary; one, to Bristol, makes up its second entry, on 19/8/1759. He made both long and short trips, the latter mostly on the "Cream Horse", an old one but used at least once on a long-distance trip, to Winchester, via Salisbury, upon which he is said to have "performed very well". Throughout this stage of his career, and for a considerable time after, he clearly did not own a riding horse of his own. Mostly he made use of one from his father's stable but occasionally, perhaps when there was no paternal mount available, he borrowed from Uncle Tom or Robert White, his brother-in-law.

Horses, then, appear prominently enough in the early diary, but mostly they come and go. Woodforde was, after all, writing a personal diary, in which he set down only such detail as he found interesting, not a history of his own life in which every trifling point has to be included. Sometimes he tells us of the circumstances in which a particular horse has been acquired, more often he does not. He tends to note down the small accidents in which he was involved. The horse stumbles and sends him flying over its head, or falls with him. Fortunately he escapes injury. He and his horse could undergo an occasional difference of opinion, usually less

drastic than his experience with the hack which stood still and would not move at all, "although I broke the thong of my lash by whipping of him". If a horse cast a shoe, or the rider found one working loose, he had to stop at a farrier's, of which there was one in every village, to have the damage repaired. In spite of the incidental expenses en route, riding on horseback was the cheapest of all methods of travel, next to walking every step of the way, as the poor had to do. A turnpike ticket cost a penny, and was valid for a journey in both directions, while any form of wheeled vehicle was at least sixpence. But, for anyone in Woodforde's situation, in the event of his relations being unable or unwilling to help out, he was obliged to call upon the services of a livery-stable keeper. This could be expensive, as it was the hirer's responsibility, upon arriving at his destination, to look after the animal until he could find an opportunity of getting it back to its home stable.

His first mention of horse-riding in this context comes from an example of this kind, in a diary entry dated 17/7/1760. It is the end of the session at Oxford, and he is about to go home for the vacation. He arranges to have a box of his clothing sent back by the Devizes* carrier. His narrative at this point is hardly so clear as a reader might have wished, but he evidently hires a hack from "Castell", a livery-stable keeper in Oxford, the horse to be later picked up and returned for him by the carrier. Arriving at his home, he discovers that the carrier has not brought his box all the way, but dropped it off at the *Bear* inn at Wincanton. He sends "old William" Corp, the family servant, to collect the box and twice despatches him there with the horse; but each time the carrier fails to turn up. Meanwhile the hack is eating its head off in the stable of Mr Woodforde senior, who no doubt has made a few pointed comments on the situation. Finally James, feeling that something must be done about it, approaches a friend of the family, Mr Plucknett, a silversmith of Wincanton, from whom the family had occasionally bought goods, and whose own servant was about to set out for Oxford and would be handy to return the horse.

On 6 October, near the end of the long vacation, Woodforde went with his uncle Tom to Wells, to visit his great-uncle, the Cathedral Treasurer. Nothing is said about the horse he rode. Four days later:

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* Written "Dev:" in the m.s. and mistakenly transcribed as "Devonshire" in the PWS edition of the diary, Vol. 1.

Set out this Morning for Oxford, with Jack
Creed, who went with me –
M[r]. White lent me his Horse to carry the
Portmanteau – For Turnpikes – P[d]. – 0 – 0 – 4

He does not mention how that horse got back to Mr White, but paid a guinea to Castell for "Horse Hire" on 28 October, presumably in payment for his own mount on the recent journey; unless it refers to that made in July.

Next year, 1761, he makes the usual preparations for setting out on his October journey to the university. For the first time his narrative mentions the "Grey Horse" (or "Papa's little Grey Horse") which must have been very reliable and handy, for he appears far more often than any other of the paternal horses in the next months, and so the diarist must have been allowed sometimes to keep him at Oxford instead of being sent home after each trip. He also alludes to Robin Emmet, whom he calls "my Servant", although he was only recruited for this journey and went back to Ansford the day after his arrival in Oxford. We see that two horses were employed on the journey, an arrangement that was not followed on another he made to the same destination almost exactly a year later, on 12 October 1762. John Coles, like Jack Creed and Emmet, was a Cary man who must have been without regular employment, since he was available to spend several consecutive days in Woodforde's service away from his native place. On this occasion, there was only one horse, the paternal grey. Coles walked to Oxford, in order to bring the horse home, an arrangement later discontinued when James was allowed to keep the horse with him at Oxford for longer periods of time. Coles must have started out before the diarist, who did not overtake him until they arrived at Everley, the overnight stop before Oxford, where "I gave him a Supper and Liquor, for which I am to pay him for, although it is out of the Agreement".* He had already contracted to pay the man twelve shillings to cover the time spent in his service. On the following day they set out together. Woodforde reached Oxford first, but Coles came in a little time later, and was behind only because he had lost his way en route. From this anecdote we gather that the speed of these working horses was hardly, or indeed not at all, above that of a man's ordinary walking pace.

* Woodforde remembered this over 30 years later: "To poor old John Coles of Cary, who used to go on foot to Oxford for me after my Horse gave 0 : 1 : 0" – m.s. Diary, 14/7/1795.

When the year 1763 began, Woodforde had been in residence at New College since the previous October, and was to continue there until 15 September following, the longest unbroken stay in his university career. All the most important occurrences in this stage of his life took place within a few weeks in 1763. He was examined for Minor Orders by the bishop of Oxford's chaplain on 23 May, "came of very well", and was ordained on 29 May. Two days later he graduated B.A. together with four other students, three of whom had begun at university on the same day as himself. The period of his occasional curacies now began with Newton Purcell, which he first served on 7 June. He was leading an energetic enough life, with work, pleasure trips and even some quarrelling, as on 16 July:

> For throwing some Wine last Night
> in Bedford's face in the B C R, I was
> sconced a Bottle of Wine, which I p^{d}.
> this Evening in the B C R –
> Bedford likewise owes a bottle of Wine
> for throwing a Cap at me last night
> in the B C R, which he has not paid yet –

There were, naturally, some inconveniences attached to all this active equestrianism. Riding to one of his one-off curacies, "Ardington near Wantage in Berkshire", he had a minor accident:

> My Horse fell down on a Trot as I was going,
> and threw me over his Head, but
> (I thank God Almighty) I received no Hurt –

While James was riding round the countryside in this way his father, as befitted his age and superior status as a beneficed rector, had a post-chaise for his journeys. He is mentioned in the diary as having bought one for the seemingly very low price of £10. Perhaps this vehicle was too cheap to be any good, for he shortly exchanged it for another costing just three times as much. Woodforde mentions this vehicle, lately bought from Bristol, in the same entry that describes a typical eighteenth century family outing, with his parents and Jenny in the chaise and he riding alongside on the grey horse, and getting very wet in the process. They were going to Sherborne, to order a monument "for my late deceased Uncle at Wells, who lays by his Wife in Yeovilton Church".

We must go forward here, in defiance of chronological order. He had little to say about the post-chaise while it was in his father's possession, but at the latter's death in 1771, it became part of the

son's inheritance. For a rather short time he sounds quite pleased to be the owner of the chaise and finds many uses for it, writing of "my Chaise" with a clear sense of proprietorial pride. Then, all at once, he gave it up, as suddenly as he abandoned other things that had once occupied his mind. He sold the chaise and gave one of the chaise horses to his brother Jack who had just begun as an independent farmer. The other horse, the blind one he says it was, he sold at a fair.

We left James in 1763, in order to prosecute our digression about the chaise, and pick him up again at the beginning of the next year. The cream horse fell with him as he rode out of Babcary on 21 January; "but (I thank God) I received no Hurt; only very dirty". Next day he records:

> Breakfasted at Home, and after Breakfast
> I walked down to my Uncle Toms, where
> I mounted his grey Mare, which he lends
> me to go to Oxford . . .

This was the famous occasion when, journeying to Oxford to vote for Mr Sale as Warden of New College, he went 27 miles out of his way to take in Bristol where he had arranged to accompany his friend Dyer for the rest of the journey, only to find that the latter had changed his mind and had no intention of keeping the promise he had made. "Well! for the future M^{r}. Dyer I shall know thee . . .". It was a wasted trip in any case, for Sale was not elected.

On 4 February for his customary trip to Babcary "I borrowed M^{r}. White's little Black Horse", and again on 11 February: "M^{r}. White lent me his little Horse again". On the 19th this same animal is called "Little Tom". Using him so often may have conferred on the rider a sense of ownership, for on the 21st he referred to him as "my Horse". When he went to Babcary on 26 February he says he went on "M^{r}. White's little Horse that was"; which suggests that the horse had been sold to his father for James' convenience. The following day he left "on the little Horse Tom" for Oxford, where he was to determine, i.e., carry out the first of the academic exercizes necessary for his M.A. He returned on 24 March 1764, having passed the remainder of term at Oxford. But on this journey, "being greatly fatigued and galled a great deal", he left the horse at the Deptford Batch inn and completed the trip by post-chaise.*

* See also part of the entry for the previous day: "I have lost leather to day by riding and am very tender in my Posteriors". 'To lose leather' – "To suffer abrasion of the skin" – Shorter O.E.D.

When he and Sister Jenny went together to Babcary on 1 April, she had "Uncle Tom's Horse", another loan.

He continued his regular rides to Babcary, not only to do "the Duty of the Day" but to pass much of his time there on what he called "Housekeeping", of which he was now having his first experience: but does not name a riding horse until 14 May, when "my little Horse Tom"

> . . . happening to lose a Shoe this Eve=
> =ning just out of Babcary, obliged me to
> walk above four Miles, and upon that ac=
> =count I did not get Home 'till 9. o'clock –
> I drove my Horse before me, & he went very well –

The same horseshoe trouble overtook him on 28 June. He was now tending to mention the horse he rode only when his mount was involved in some minor accident; a sign that he was now riding the same horse frequently, and that the novelty had worn off. On 25 January 1765 a letter from his brother John in Bristol, where he was now in his short-lived partnership with the iron merchant Homfray, mentions a grey horse which he thinks James might buy, but no more is heard of this and no horse is bought. He was still riding his father's "little Tom", but the name of the horse is unmentioned when he writes:

> Went this morning early towards Oxford with
> William Burge who carries my portmanteau
> M^{r}. White lent me his mare to go to Oxford upon, &c.
> – 29/4/1769

To return, he booked a seat in the "Bath Fly" and was met on his arrival in that city by the family servant William Corp "with Horses". The next time he went to Babcary, it was upon the back of one of the paternal chaise horses, "my Horse Tom being sold since I was at Oxford, which I am not sorry for". Here, the word "my" means no more than "which I was allowed to use", and this is the last we ever hear of that particular horse. After Woodforde gave up Babcary, he did for a time far less riding about, having enough work to do at home in looking after his father's two parishes. He was quite plainly reduced to borrowing from anyone who would lend. He does not say how he got to the funeral of Parson Dymock at Hornblotton, but that he went there "with two Horses". After a longish period in which he seems not to have moved out of his own parish, he borrowed his brother John's horse to attend

another funeral, that of Mrs Fooks on 21 April. The next trip he made, on 29 July, concerned Jack's "sweetheart" Nancy Wason, whose mother he went to see in an attempt to reconcile her to the match.

However, although no longer having a mount especially earmarked for his own use, he had a fairly wide range of options open to him. Members of his family continued to help out: Brother John and Robert White but not Uncle Tom, with whom he was soon to fall out. Then there were the livery-stable keepers. When on 1 September he set out for Winchester to be present at the Election as a spectator, it was "upon Beal's Horse". Stephen Beal was an innkeeper at Gannard's Grave. When, after a long interval, the diarist finally got to Oxford for another visit on 20 April 1767, it was Beal who provided the horses for himself and servant Luke Barnard; "seemingly very good", he said when he first saw them. For his return on 2 and 3 June, he did the whole journey in post-chaises.

An interesting incidental reference to the very bad weather in January 1768 tells that Woodforde normally used the family chaise to take the church service at Castle Cary (Ansford, of course, being no more than a stone's throw from the Parsonage)

> I read Prayers & Preached this morning at Castle Cary C. –
> I was obliged to walk to Church on Account of the Snow
> my Father not thinking Wheels &c. safe such Weather –
> – 10/1/1768

In the spring of 1768 he wanted to attend the Parliamentary election for Oxford University. He was unable to get a horse from Beal, but "M^{r}. Francis", presumably the Cary shopkeeper of that name, offered to lend one, for the use of which he paid. Returning, he wrote that "M^{r}. Francis's Horse performed the Journey very well, as did Edmunds also to amazement". This last must have been taken along on the trip, and was almost certainly Mr White's man whose own surname was also White. Francis, in addition, supplied the horses when the diarist went with Justice Creed to visit Mr Henry Hoare at Stourhead. This horse is mentioned again on 7 September, when he carried Woodforde on a coursing expedition, when they "killed a brace of fine young Hares".

From all this it is abundantly clear that in his father's lifetime, and for whatever reason, he did not actually own a horse. His father died in May 1771, and by the next month he had repaired the omission and acquired his first horse:

. . . I bought a fine Bay Mare (by Name Longlegs) of my Brother John this Morning & two Bridles & one Saddle all very good for which I paid him in ready Money this morning – 21 : 0 : 0

This mare, with her name transmogrified to "Peggy" as more befitting her gender, was to be the Parson's regular mount in the forthcoming years. She was to have a long life at Weston Parsonage, and we know what became of her at last:

. . . My poor old Bay-Mare, Peggy, that I bought of my Brother John, 20. Years ago, was this morning shot by M[r]. Townshend's Gamekeeper, John Hutchins according to my Order, before I was come down Stairs – She was so very old, very lame & so exceeding poor, that I thought it an Act of Charity to do as I did by her – She was dead in a Moment, my Folks told me . . .

Ms. Diary – 8/4/1791

In 1776, five years later, he was again in the market for horses. It was the year of the move to Norfolk. If Nancy had been able to accompany her uncle as arranged, he would perforce have gone with her by stagecoach, in the pattern of later years. The "King's Evil" having put paid to that plan, it was the three men, of whom the most senior was still fairly youthful, who went across country, along with the "old Dog", Spring. For this expedition two more horses were required. On 22 April:

M[r]. White brought me a Portmanteau Horse. I hope he shall do – I don't know the price of it –

Two days later:

I seem to like the Horse that M[r]. White brought me very well – I asked M[r]. White the Price & he told me – 17 : 6 : 0

This was a heavy horse, a weight-carrier, "my great Horse", afterwards called "Jack" at the Parsonage. It is scarcely too much to say that Woodforde respected this "good natured Horse", as he termed the animal, almost as though he had been a human being of whose conduct and behaviour his owner approved, and was very upset when the beast died in spite of all the farrier could do. Of course he said that he had been called in too late. But if Nephew Bill were to go to Norfolk, he also had to be provided with a mount. This led to the purchase of another mare, only two days before the little party started. On 7 May the Parson wrote:

Mr. White spent part of the Afternoon at Parsonage –
He brought me this morning a very pretty Bay Mare 14. Hands
high, 5. Years old, for Bill Woodforde to ride with me –
I paid Mr. White for both Horses to day – 27 : 16 : 9

We know the end of this mare as well as her beginning in Woodforde's service. On 4 January 1796, having reached the extreme of equine senility, she was shot by the same gamekeeper who had disposed of Peggy.

A small, vivid incident survives, thanks to the diary, from the third day of the Norfolk journey, perhaps owing to some careless error on the part of a livery-stable helper, which the Parson had not supervised:

My bay Mare coughed exceedingly between Hungerford
& Farnborough worse than I ever knew her –
I believe it to be owing to eating beans only for Corn –
At 4. this afternoon we set forth for Oxford and got there
I thank God safe and well at about 9. o'clock we
came on slow on Account of my Mare – I gave her
no Beans at Farnborough only Oats well watered and
she came on brave afterwards –
I rode my new little Mare quite to Oxford, but she
strained by [sic – for "my"] left Hand-wrist very much this
Afternoon
by my giving her a very violent Check on her making a
false Step – it pained very much all the Evening & Night –

Of course, long after Woodforde's long distance journeys by public transport vehicles had started, he still used his two riding mares for short trips, to Norwich and for the purpose of dining out with his friends in the nearby villages. This period lasted something more than a decade. So far as we know he continued to ride until he was just short of fifty, still in reasonably good health and quite active, although the time when gout and cramp will attack him is not far away. On 2 June 1789 he went to Weston House and on to Mr Jeans "on my old Mare". Significantly enough, the next day he went to Norwich with Briton, but this time used a cart. Soon after, he was off on one of his long trips to Somerset; and upon his return, we search the diary in vain for any reference to riding. If this is right and I have not missed an important reference, his time as a horseman ended about the middle of 1789.

He did purchase three more horses. The first was bought for him by Ben Leggett, his "Farming Man" early in 1783:

To Ben this Evening for a Horse which he bought
this morning for me of John Norton, a short dark
Punchy Horse with Hog Main [sic] & docked Tail. aged
10. Years next Midsummer, and one that bears a
very good Character in the draft Way, and one
that is very hardy & always kept so – p^{d}. Ben – 4 : 4 : 0
(10/2/1783)

In 1788 he bought a colt, named "Rodney" after the victorious admiral, and paid 1/6d to "one Farrow of Melton" to have the animal castrated. Two days later he fell ill from the results of the operation, and his owner called in a farrier, Mr. Gould, "to do what he could for him in my absence". "The little Hobby", as he is also termed, soon recovered, and is quite often mentioned in the diary. By 1794 he had gone blind, and Woodforde replaced him by purchasing from the same farrier another horse, at 15 guineas, which he describes in an unusual wealth of detail:

. . . He is of a dark Chesnut
Colour, very compact make, of the Suffolk kind, short
body, handsome forehead just the height for our
little Curricle, hog mane, short dock Tail, and the
only blemish in him, is a bone Spavin* in the off
hind Leg, which at present is by no means bad,
he goes a little limping at first setting out. His
Age I apprehend to be about 8. Years. –
His name is Punch. Nancy likes him very much –
(Ms. Diary – 24/3/1794)

Rodney, however, who had temporarily been lent to the farrier "to supply Punch's place", was kept on as an equine member of the household staff. He was thought to be dying in September 1801 but got better and was still around so late as September 1802. Indeed, he may have outlived his owner, if he was the "useful horse" listed among the late rector's possessions in the following year.

The last pair, of course, were not riding-horses but kept to pull carts, and they take us into the ultimate phase of Woodforde's travels. It may come as a surprise to the reader to be told that he had no fewer than four of these, listed in the 1803 inventory, along with "Turnip sledge", as "Do. cart, nearly new"; "Road cart"; "Taxed cart and cushion"; and "Market Cart". It is impossible to distinguish

* "A hard bony tumour or excresence formed at the union of the splinterbone and the shank in a horse's leg, and produced by inflammation of the cartilege uniting these bones; a similar tumour caused by inflammation of the small back bones" – Shorter OED.

exactly between these, in terms of their actual use. Some must have been for the transport of various kinds of farm and other produce. Woodforde himself may have used more than one name for the same vehicle. In addition to his "little old cart" and "Little new cart", the latter bought in 1791, he mentions a "Curricle" as the vehicle he drove about in habitually. I do not know how many passengers a "Market cart" or a "Curricle" would have accommodated, but at a guess, it was not more than two. A post-chaise would provide for four, but even this was not always enough. When the Parson's brother and wife, and her sister, were visiting, two chaises from Lenwade Bridge had to be hired for the five persons involved.

And what, finally, of the roads, upon which all this activity took place. The coaching era lasted about 30 years after Woodforde's lifetime, constantly becoming faster, more efficient and more expensive. It did not begin to decline immediately after the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester railway, as is usually thought. On the contrary, the railways made travelling far more popular than it had ever been. It might almost be said that the delight in movement itself, as distinct from the object of the journey, began at this time. Also, at least in the first thirty years of their life, the builders of railways concentrated upon large centres of population, and many a journey which began at the rail station continued with the use of a coach and horses. The number of horses bred for road work greatly increased during this period. Later on, of course, even smaller and minor roads were deserted as the "iron horse" took over more and more of their traffic.

So the roads evolved to meet the differing needs of man: cheerful, animated and busy in Woodforde's time; empty, silent and, by comparison with what we have to contend with today, very beautiful in the age of the railways. We might perhaps again, in some distant, dimly imagined future, have roads which are not an offence alike to the eye, the ear, the nostrils and lungs. But to achieve that happy consummation, we would have to wipe off the face of the earth every last motor-car in the world.

MORE ON ROBERT HOLMES

The Rev. Anthony Gelston D.D., Emeritus Professor in Theology in the University of Durham and Past President of the Society of Old Testament Studies writes:

I was greatly interested to read, by courtesy of my friend the Revd. E. B. Pateman, the article in the Journal, vol. XXXI, no. 3. It may be of interest to some readers to know that I can add to the testimony to the continuing value of Holmes' work on the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament), quoted on p. 26 of the Journal. In the current standard introduction to the Septuagint, "The Septuagint and Modern Study" (Oxford, 1968), S. Jellicoe begins his second paragraph:

> All this, however, was but preparatory. A new era dawned with the English scholar Robert Holmes, Fellow of New College and Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford from 1783 to 1805, and his continuator James Parsons, whose edition of the Septuagint, with its abundance of variant readings, remains today indispensable to serious text-critical study. (pp. 1-2)

This statement indicates the importance of Holmes as the initiator of modern critical work on the manuscripts of the Septuagint, and the continuing importance of his record of the variant readings of the different manuscripts.

I have myself been engaged in similar work in relation to manuscripts of another ancient translation of the Old Testament, that into Syriac, and can write from experience. Any sound conclusions about the transmission of a text by manuscripts depend in the first place on a careful collection of the variant readings of the manuscripts, followed by an evaluation of the individual manuscripts and an attempt to determine which of the variant readings are most likely to be original. This is necessarily painstaking and time-consuming work, and the world of Old Testament scholarship remains permanently indebted to the pioneering work of Robert Holmes.

"UPON THE WHOLE AN AGREEABLE DAY"

> *The parson of the Parish in England, a few years ago, was almost necessarily a man who had been educated at Oxford or Cambridge . . . And then came an assurance, in which trust was put by more or less all classes, that the parson of the parish was at least a gentleman. He was a man who had lived on equal terms with the highest in the land in point of birth, and hence arose a feeling that was very general in rural parishes, and as salutary as it was general, that the occupant of the parsonage was as good a man as the occupant of the squire's house. It would be interesting to us to trace when this feeling first became common, knowing as we do know that for many years after the Reformation, and down even to a comparatively late date, the rural clergyman was anything but highly esteemed. We are told constantly that the parson left the dining-room when the pudding came in, and that he by no means did badly for himself in marrying the lady's maid . . . Then came the halcyon days of the British clergyman, the happy days of George III and George IV, and the parson in his parsonage was as good a gentleman as any squire in his mansion or nobleman in his castle. There is, alas! a new order of things coming on us which threatens us with some changes, not for the better, in this respect.*
>
> (Anthony Trollope: *Clergymen of the Church of England* (1866). Reprinted from the Pall Mall Gazette. The Trollope Society)*

There is a good deal of truth in this observation of Trollope's and his general point is supported by no less an authority than the great historian G. M. Trevelyan, who claims, in the first volume of *England under Queen Anne*, that

> Before the end of the reign of George III, Jane Austen depicted a society in which the rural clergy are scarcely to be distinguished from squires in education, in standing, and in desirability as husbands for young ladies – although *even at that time there was a class of poor parson of whom we hear nothing in these novels of sheltered life.* (My italics)

This latter, of course, is not an accusation that can be levelled against Trollope himself who introduces us not only to the likes of Mr Robarts and Archdeacon Grantly but also to Mr Crawley and Mr Quiverful. Trevelyan, too, tells us of the social division signalled in the houses of some of the squirearchy early in the century by the arrival of dessert, quoting Addison who censured

* I am grateful to Mr R. L. Winstanley for drawing my attention to this piece.

those patrons who dismissed their chaplains prior to its arrival or forbade them to touch the jelly. That paragon of the Tory virtues Sir Roger de Coverley was not, of course, such a squire.

The gradual rise in the status of the clergy which took place in the eighteenth century owed much to the introduction of Queen Anne's Bounty, agreed by Parliament in 1704, which remitted all arrears of first-fruits and tenths to poor clergymen and established a fund to increase their stipends. After the fractious disputes between High and Low Church in Queen Anne's own reign, the emergence of the kind of compromise Anglican orthodoxy to which Woodforde himself assented probably did much to increase the respectability, if not necessarily the piety, of the clergy.

At Winchester and at Oxford Woodforde had certainly encountered scions of the aristocracy and landed gentry, men like the Oglanders and Bathursts, as well as numerous sons of squires. But not only was he not himself from a landed background, his small estate at Sandford Orcas hardly qualified him for that, he was more familiar with the relative openness of a small town elite than he was with the more permanent, if by no means fixed, social structures of the countryside. This may explain why, when he arrived at Weston, having been elected to his parish by the Warden and Fellows of New College, he was to treat "my Squire" Mr Custance with the deference more appropriately due to a patron. Thus, having supported the Wilkite tendencies of the Castle Cary middle-class and been an occasional subscriber to the *North Briton*, he became for the rest of his life, like Mr Custance, a Tory. There can be little doubt, of course, that Woodforde genuinely admired Custance, but one suspects that he was predisposed at least not to criticise him. This was not a question of subservience as much as of social insecurity – remember his brothers were Heighes and John Woodforde! – and for a conformist such as Woodforde the natural inclination was not to rock the boat.

Familiarity with Mr Custance, the upwardly mobile grandson of a mayor of Norwich, saw a friendly respect grow into a respectful friendship. In the case of Mr Du Quesne, the son of a French marquis and grandson of an English baronet with connections that included the Archbishop of Canterbury, Woodforde appears to have met a man not only with consummate social skills but also with a capacity for friendship to which he himself could readily respond. We only have to read Du Quesne's letters to Woodforde, written by the former from St David's, to recognise that he is as

much a gentleman – "rather beloved than esteemed", lacking completely in *hauteur* – as the eighteenth century archetype, his namesake, Sir Roger (see R. L. Winstanley, 'Mr Du Quesne at St David's', Journal XIX, 4).

Two lengthy diary entries will serve to place Woodforde in the social milieu in which he was most at home. The first shows us why he lacked ambition in terms of preferment and the second demonstrates what it was about Weston that he found most to his liking. Both are to be found in the Society's latest publication, Volume 10 of the Diary, edited by R. L. Winstanley.

I breakfasted, supped & slept again at home –
M^{r}. Custance made me long morning Visit and
offered to send his Coach after me to dine with him
to day by appointment, but I told him that M^{r}. Du
Quesne who dines also at Weston House to day would
take me thither in his Chaise as he promised
and therefore ab^{t}. 2. o'clock Du Quesne did call on me
stayed with me ab^{t}. half an Hour and then we both
went to Weston House in our Gowns & Cassocks (as
we are to meet the Bishop of Norwich there to day)
and there we dined & spent the Afternoon with M^{r}.
and M^{rs}. Custance, the Bishop and his Lady M^{rs}. Bagot,
his Lordships Chaplain M^{r}. Gooch and S^{r}. William
and Lady Jernegan – M^{r}. and M^{rs}. Branthwaite
were also invited but did not come the former having
sent word in the morning that he had the Gout –
The Bishop was not dressed in his Gown & Cassock but
in a purple Coat and a short silk Cassock under it –
The Company all broke up about half past seven o'clock.
I got home by 8. – could not prevail with Du Quesne to
stay and sup with me on his return –
We had for Dinner some stewed Carp, Ham & Fowls
a fine Cygnet rosted &c. &c. – the first Course –
A brace of Pheasants rosted, a fine Hare rosted
Blamange, green Peas, &c. &c. – the second Course –
Many Dishes of Desert afterwards but nothing extra –
The Bishop took Du Quesne very genteelly in to preach
a Charity Sermon the ensuing Year at Norwich towards
the Support of the Charity Schools there –
S^{r}. Will^{m}. Jernegan is a very fine Man, very easy
affable & good natured – Lady Jernegan is a fine
Woman but high and mighty – they are both of the
Romish Persuasion – It being Friday and a Fast Day
of Course to them, they however eat Fowl, Pheasant

and Swan and S^{r}. Will^{m}. eat some Ham –
Upon the whole we spent an agreeable Day, but must
confess that being with our equals is much more agreeable.
(7/11/1783)

However much our diarist may have enjoyed his food, he was clearly not the kind of glutton for whom so sumptuous a feast more than compensated for a sense of social unease. One suspects that he enjoyed himself far more on the following day when he "Went out a coursing to day with my Folks . . . we had tolerable Sport". How much more agreeable "being with our equals" was to Woodforde we discover on 23 March in the following year:

I breakfasted, supped & slept again at home –
Nancy breakfasted, dined, &c. &c. again at home –
About 11. this Morning took a ride & Will: with me
then went to Mattishall called on M^{rs}. Davy & Betsy
both at home but M^{rs}. Davy was very ill and in bed.
Stayed there half an Hour, then walked to M^{r}. Smiths
found him at home & disengaged, therefore promised
to take a Family Dinner – then walked to M^{r}. Bodham's
saw M^{r}. & M^{rs}. Bodham and Miss Bodham – they wanted
me to dine there but was engaged to M^{r}. Smith –
Stayed there almost an Hour – Saw at M^{r}. Bodhams
a M^{r}. Wright of Downham a Surgeon – & Billy Hewitt.
Returned to M^{r}. Smith by 2. o'clock & there dined
with him only – We had for Dinner some minced
Veal, some cold slices of Port & a plumb Pudding –
M^{r}. Bodham came & smoked a Pipe with us after Dinner –
About 5. walked down by myself to M^{rs}. Davys and there
drank [tea?] with her and her Daughter Betsy – stayed there
till 6. then mounted my Mare and returned home –
Got home about 7. o'clock – spent a very pleasant Day –

One further point might be made about these two contrasting diary entries. Woodforde is perfectly honest with himself. He knows exactly what he likes – modest, undemanding pleasures – and who he likes – his friends and social equals. It is this honesty, of course, which gives us such faith in the integrity of the diary and it is the way in which it is expressed which provides its charm.

HOW A BISHOP LED TO BUGSY-WUGSY

All through the morning of St Valentine's Day 1662, much to her husband's amusement, Elizabeth Pepys would venture out of her room only with her hands over her eyes. Workmen were in the house, painters gilding the mantelpiece in Samuel's study, and she did not want to see one by accident and so have to take him as her Valentine.

Late in the morning, young William Bowyer came to the rescue. He was the son of one of Samuel's associates from the Exchequer, and Elizabeth was happy with him, though Samuel did not record what Valentine present William gave her.

It was always a day for practical jokes and presents. The previous year, Samuel had thought it politic to take Martha Batten, step-daughter of the Surveyor to the Navy, as his Valentine. He was very careful when he called at their door to enquire whether it would be a man or wóman who opened it; he did not want to be trapped into having one of their maidservants. When his knock was answered by a strange female voice, he was quick enough to recognise one of his other colleagues having him on.

He gave Martha a pair of embroidered gloves and six plain pairs, which cost him 40s, no small sum. Another year it was green silk stockings and more gloves to his cousin.

His wife, Elizabeth, was popular with their very young friends who, more than once, came to her and Samuel's bedside to claim her as a Valentine. Their presents were modest; one brought no more than her name written in gold on blue paper, which she and Samuel agreed was very pretty. But she did not want to miss out on more valuable presents, so she took the precaution of insisting that Samuel should always be her additional Valentine, and each year buy her a ring or some other valuable trinket she had her eye on. Present-giving was much more a feature of St Valentine's Day than it was of Christmas.

Such sportiveness, let alone modern newspaper columns full of "Pooh loves Piglet" and "Bugsy-Wugsy wants his Tootles", or worse, is a long way from the obscure third-century martyr, or possibly two martyrs, called Valentine, both by coincidence put to death on 14 February.

One was said to be a Roman priest imprisoned at the time of Claudius II for ministering to Christian prisoners awaiting death.

When he converted his Roman gaoler, together with the gaoler's wife and family, he was beaten with rods and beheaded in 269 on the Flaminian Way, where a church was eventually built in his honour.

Even less is known about the other possible St Valentine, a Bishop of Terni executed in Rome in 273. The *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* says cautiously that each legend "contains a nucleus of fact; and it is just possible that the kernel of truth in the two legends refers to a single person".

The courtship tradition associated with their feast day is assumed to have much more to do with the fact that 14 February was the eve of the Roman Lupercalia, the festival sacred to Pan originally held at Lupercal, where the she-wolf is said to have reared Romulus and Remus. Two goats and a dog were sacrificed, and their skins were made into whips with which two naked youths would run about the streets, lashing at all they could reach. What effect the whipping had on men is not clear, but for women it was a fertility rite, overcoming barrenness and easing the pains of childbirth.

The festival spread and became something of a riot, until the prudish Emperor Augustus forbade anyone over the age of 14 to run naked in the streets of Rome during the Lupercalia.

It was, of course, the right time of year for turning European minds to courtship. The birds were at it, and Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*, written around 1380, was based on the long-held belief that the birds chose their mates on 14 February, a belief that lasted among country children well into this century.

Men and women also responded to spring stirrings of the blood, and often used to choose their Valentines by lottery, as well as by chance meeting. Queen Elizabeth I selected her own Valentine and then left the rest of her court to draw theirs by lot.

Once they were drawn, all sorts of customs prevailed at different times and in different places. Sometimes one wore the Valentine's name on a piece of paper, publicly or secretly; sometimes the couple had to kiss, or be seen together for several days; and there were many superstitions about marriage.

By Queen Victoria's reign, it was still believed that the first person of the opposite sex you saw outside the house on St Valentine's Day would influence your destiny; but *Punch* advised those who wanted greater freedom in choosing their partner to remain indoors until the spell expired at 12 noon.

The customs were gradually watered down, but St Valentine's Day continued to be one of the noted feast days of the calendar, however secular its observance. In Norfolk, it long continued as a time for present-giving. The custom there was for anonymous presents to be left on the doorstep. The fun was in the secrecy.

But there were more prosaic customs. When the Revd James Woodforde moved to his parish of Weston Longville in 1777, he discovered it was the tradition for the parson to give a penny to every child under the age of 14 who called at the rectory on 14 February, and was able to say "Good morrow, Valentine". (If the 14th was a Sunday, they would turn up on the Monday morning.)

In his first year, there were only 26 children, which cost him 3 shillings; but the number increased, and by 1798 there were 90 children at a cost of 7s 6d, pretty well a week's wages for a working man.

At the same time he gave a Valentine present to the niece who lived with him, which gradually increased from £1 to £10. He was always a generous man.

In general, however, present-giving declined in the 18th century, and was replaced by the early Valentine cards, with hand-painted hearts and flowers, and handwritten verses. Commercialism took over; and by the middle of the 19th century the festival had become such a booming industry that the post office had to plead with its customers to post their cards early, and for all "Valentines containing cut flowers, bouquets, confectionery, toys, fancy articles etc" to be carefully packed.

Many of the Victorian cards were exquisite confections of paper lace with hand-painted flowers, romantic scenes ansd sentimental verses, slightly spoiled, to our eyes, by the resemblance of all the young ladies in the tender pictures to their rather podgy Queen with her stiffly formal consort.

The poetry was not of the best quality: "O'er Love's sea, in Love's boat, Lover with thee, I could float". Some would go no further than declaring their anonymous card to be "a token of sincere affection".

Standards declined towards the end of the century, and vulgarity set in until cards became downright rude. What did the recipient make of:

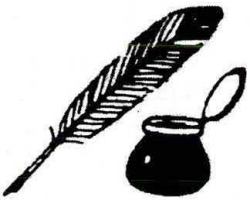
Oh, lovely charmer with a voice so sweet
and loud, folks hear you halfway down the street.
"I would I were a bird"; yes, a pretty bird you'd be:
The parrot tribe I think is best compared to thee.

Romantic cards reappeared in the 1930s, and today are still to be found among others of very dubious humour.

But now the newspaper columns have taken over in a big way, and the hundreds of cryptic messages they carry are an annual contribution to the papers' advertising revenue.

It has been a curious history; and there must surely be scope for a historian's – perhaps a psychologist's – thesis on how we got from that Roman priest executed on the Flaminian Way to Bugsy-Wugsy and Tootles.

– By kind permission of the Editor, 'Church Times', 13/2/1998



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.

The Annual membership subscription of £12.50 (overseas members £25) becomes due on 1 January and should be forwarded to the Treasurer, Dr David Case, 25 Archery Square, Walmer, Deal, Kent CT14 7JA.

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