

PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

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25th December.

A small frost this morning, close day, wind rather cold. I went to our church foornoon, a sacrament, no sermon. All our labourers and familys amounting to between 60 and 70, our own family included, dined here.

32lbs mutton 16lbs pork 16lbs beef

2 stone flour about 12½lbs plumbs 5lbs suet 20 pts milk.

I, M.A. and William went to Holt Church afternoon. Mr. Meakin preached.

Christmas 1802
Mary Hardy's Diary
Norfolk Record Society

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Cover Illustration

The Reverend James Woodforde, *Samuel Woodforde R.A. (1763-1817)*



EDITORIAL

Since the publication of John Beresford's edition of his Diary in the 1920s, James Woodforde has been subject to numerous posthumous humiliations. Whether he would have wished the details of the goings-on at the Lower House, or his failures in love, or his intimate medical history to be revealed and widely read we must doubt. He was not Sam Pepys – Claire Tomalin's 'unequalled self' – both more passionate and more objective than Woodforde. There can be little doubt that Pepys would have revelled in the prospect of latter-day fame. Woodforde would probably have been appalled. Yet because of the Diary his ghost is almost as substantial as flesh and blood, his personality one that we regard with affection. How easily we see him skating down the frozen Isis, coursing a hare across Weston Great Field, or walking, deep in conversation, with Mr Du Quesne from Cole to Bruton! In commemorating the 200th anniversary of his death we do so secure in the knowledge that, in addition to the contribution the Diary has made to our understanding of eighteenth century social and domestic history, it has given pleasure to many thousands of readers; enjoyment of a kind which Woodforde, surely, would not have resented. An outcome of the Diary's publication and of the consequent formation of this Society of which he would, we hope, positively have approved, was the decision to mark the anniversary with the presentation to All Saints', Weston Longville of a handsome candle holder – 54" high and designed to hold a 2" diameter candle – bearing his name.

This edition of the Journal is primarily devoted to the sad events at Weston Parsonage two hundred years ago. The chapter from Roy Winstanley's biography on his subject's death is reprinted with kind permission of the publisher and Phyllis Stanley provides a fresh look at the Revd John Cartwright Maynard, a true friend to Woodforde in his declining years. In recent times much has been written about the timepieces which marked the hours of the diarist's life and here David Case lucidly summarises the current state of our knowledge of this sometimes bewildering topic. Caroline Mosey provides a report on that far from gloomy occasion – the Society's Annual Frolick held at Norwich in September. Many thanks to all who have contributed to the Journal in the past year and to all readers a happy and healthy New Year.

Do remember that early in the New Year, thanks to the scholarly

efforts of Peter Jameson, the latest volume – Volume 13 – of the Society's edition of the diary, covering the years 1791-1793, will be available. By filling in the tear-off slip provided with the Newsletter you can ensure that you receive your copy within days of publication.

The eminent eighteenth century historian J. H. Plumb, who died earlier in the year, wrote authoritatively on Walpole and, more provocatively, on 'The Death of the Past'. This last phrase occurred to me the other day when listening to a radio programme in which a much younger historian was describing events during the American Revolution: 'the war is far from continuous; campaigning is spasmodic; British officers are able to enjoy the social life of Philadelphia etc.' Curiously enough, this usage – of what grammarians are apparently happy to call the historic present – is also employed by footballers reporting their recent exploits on the field of play. I am a novice but it goes something like this – 'Becks chips the goalie, hits the bar and all I do is follow up and tap in'. For footballers and historians alike, it seems, the past is, indeed, dead! Fortunately, despite the contortions which the English language is continually being forced to perform, history is popular as never before and, whatever is happening to the past tense, the Past is anything but dead and, two hundred years after our diarist's death, life at Ansford and Weston Parsonage goes on – Woodforde lives!

MARTIN BRAYNE

“WE HAVE LOST MR. WOODFORDE”

[Reproduced with the permission of the publishers from Roy Winstanley's *Parson Woodforde: The Life and Times of a Country Diarist*, Morrow & Co., Bungay, 1996.]

James Woodforde was for most of his life a reasonably healthy man. He lived into his 63rd year, a life-span his contemporaries would have considered long and extending into old age. He was, it is true, not one of the most robust of men. His father, as we have seen, considered him “very ill” when he conducted his baptism at three days old. As a schoolboy at Winchester, he suffered an attack of smallpox, almost certainly caused by the inoculation procedure that was intended to prevent the disease attacking him. From the age of 19, when he began to keep his diary, we have what is virtually a day-to-day record of his state of health. From this, fuller and more detailed than anything of its kind that we possess for the life of any of his contemporaries, we can see that he was fully able to enjoy an active life. As an undergraduate, he took part in the sports and games played by his fellow-collegians and other active young men. Cricket was certainly far less dangerous to life and limb than that game has become today, but it was never a pastime for invalids or weaklings. He played bowls and was quite an expert skater. Another kind of endurance is shown by his ability to stand long nights. On more than one occasion he mentions playing cards all night – and doubtless drinking hard all the time – without any seeming ill-effects.

For a long time I had the impression that he was a small, slight man, but as he several times refers to this or that acquaintance or person met by chance as ‘little’, a term he would himself have been unlikely to use if he had been of particularly small stature himself, it is probably nearer the mark if he is visualised as a middle-sized person. Certainly he was no man of muscle, a type less admired in his day than it is in ours. He had three fist-fights during his time at University – this is not counting the time when he ‘threshed’ the saddler’s apprentice, who seems not to have offered the least resistance – and got decidedly the worst of two of them. He and John Webber, later the Junior Proctor, whom Woodforde was to assist as Pro-Proctor, quarrelled in the Bachelor’s Common Room and repaired to New College garden to settle their differences, whereupon ‘He beat me unmercifully, being as strong again’.¹ Another combat was more serious when he got to ‘jawing and

fighting' with an undergraduate named Russell and was so badly beaten up that he had to stay in his room for a week.² It is noteworthy, all the same, that these fights did not affect the continuance of his friendship with either of the men.

One of the signs that he did not have much wrong with him is his detailed descriptions of very common disorders – the boils on his 'posteriors' which he had for two years running, a 'Wist' or sty on his eyelid, the colds and 'influenza', a word already current in his time. He recovered quickly from minor ailments, and a day or two after he had first sounded the alarm about them he was once more 'brave'. The one symptom at which one might have expected him to show some apprehension, the sudden fainting attacks recorded in all parts of the diary, although recurring at fairly long intervals, seem not to have worried him at all. One such attack came while he was playing draughts with Bill at Weston. He fell out of his chair, bruising his face on the floor. But it was his nephew who was 'terribly frightened', just by seeing it happen.

In Woodforde's middle years, the first decade or so of his residence in Norfolk, the diary shows him in his greatest phase of activity. This is the time when the 'Rotations', and all the rest of the round of social activity are near their peak. His shopping and bill paying expeditions to Norwich occur most frequently, and the pattern of his visits back to the old haunts in the West Country, on an average once every three years, are set and adhered to. He never owned the kind of horses that would have been of any use in a foxhunt and indeed apparently had no interest in hunting. On the other hand he greatly enjoyed coursing, and found it useful as well as pleasurable, since the hares his greyhounds caught either ended up on the Parsonage dinner table or were given away as presents to friends.

It was undoubtedly the brisk outdoor exercise he took that kept him healthy for so long, as it mitigated the harmful effects of the imprudence in his way of life. His diet was by modern standards quite appallingly wrong. It was an implicit belief in this society that eating meat, and as much meat as possible, was essential to maintain good health, and at the same time an infallible indicator of prosperity and well-being. This was the period when all British people believed, or affected to believe, that the French lived on 'soup and roasted frogs', and would split their sides at Hogarth's engraving of 'Calais Gate', with its starveling sentry, rickety and asthenic, no match for strong islanders nourished on the roast beef of old England. It is true that vegetables appeared at Woodforde's table, and that he occasionally

criticised the host at dinner parties to which he was invited when 'Garden Stuff', as he called it, was missing. But it is more than likely that his actual consumption of these extras was sparing, by comparison with the platefuls of meat that constituted a hearty meal.

The trouble with him, as with so many of his contemporaries, was that as he aged he grew lazy and took less exercise. It was a bad day for him when he gave up coursing, which he did in the sudden manner that marked the renunciation of so many of his discarded activities and pleasures. Less energetic, hence more sedentary, he also tended to eat more because, again in common with most of his contemporaries, he held the most untimely and unfortunate belief that, so long as he retained 'a good appetite', nothing could be seriously wrong with him. This led to his eating not only more than his system needed or was good for it but, as often must have happened, more than he really wanted to consume. In spite of the violent purges to which he was addicted, for much of the time his system was clogged with imperfectly digested food.

By the time he reached 50 he was already beginning to suffer from the circulatory troubles, such as cramp, that afterwards so plagued him. In his final decade he was often attacked by gout, or what he took for that disease. It was very painful, as he tells us but, because he believed, like everyone else in his time, in the existence of a condition known as 'flying gout', which wandered through the organism until it reached a vital organ, heart or brain, and at once killed the sufferer, he was always pleased and relieved to find the arthritic state safely located in the extremities.

On Christmas Day, 1794, he was in church, had already taken part of the service, the familiar 'Read Prayers and Preached' and was preparing for 'the administration of the H. Sacrament', when he had another of his faints, which he called 'An Epileptic Fit'.³ What really scared him was the combination of the fainting attack and the cold. Most of the winters in the 1790s were unusually cold. It is to be remembered that mediaeval churches, their stone walls feet rather than inches thick, had no form of interior heating. Woodforde says that he had been afraid of being taken ill in church 'for some Winters past'. He recovered quickly and 'went through the remaining part of my duty'. He was touched by the kindness of the farmers in his scanty congregation, those who had braved the cold to attend. He was after all no mere William Neave, who could fall from the top of a barn, and into a ditch, without anyone taking much

notice. It was indeed Neave's employer, Mr Howlett, who 'very kindly offered' to drive the Rector home 'in his Cart'. Woodforde refused this, and instead went into Stephen Andrews' farmhouse, where he sat by the fire until he was warm, and then walked home. But this comparatively trifling incident left an indelible mark on his mind. Less than a year later, he returned from what was to be the last of his Somerset holidays, took two more church services and then engaged Mr Corbould as curate to do his work, at a stipend of £30 a year,⁴ less than a tenth of his own income. Apparently he was never seen in the church again, and the episode marks the beginning of his slow and gradual slide into invalidism.

In the late spring of 1797 he was attacked by a serious illness, which came on suddenly on the night of 12 May. Woodforde himself never explains it clearly enough to allow a reader of the diary more than a guess at its nature. He says that he had 'a fit ... and there I laid all night in a very bad State scarce sensible all the Night long'. From this it appears that he did not summon assistance, so that it would have been morning when Nancy and Betty Dade put a 'Blister' between his shoulders. This was another practice that went back to the old doctrine of humours, which were supposed to be drawn out of the body by the application of an irritant substance to the skin. Woodforde got up as usual, and although the inevitable Dr Thorne, who had been 'sent for', arrived and 'immediately ordered' him back to bed, he did not stay there for more than a few days. He was seemingly not at all affected mentally, since he continued to write up his diary, which for some indecipherable reason he entered on loose sheets – ultimately 100 of them, identical with the paper back booklets he had used until 1776, instead of the current hard back book. Perhaps the most likely speculation is that Woodforde had sustained a minor stroke, this being strengthened by his having written on 9 June, when he was recovering: 'still very weak in all my right Side', which indicates some degree of transient paralysis.

Whatever it was, there seems little doubt that this illness was the direct precursor of his death nearly six years later. It is not too much to say that, from this time onwards, he was never again really well. The diary of his last years is a long chronicle of malaise, and of the fear and depression that accompanied it. Woodforde complains repeatedly of weakness, giddiness, shortness of breath and intestinal trouble. He sleeps badly and coughs at night, probably from chronic bronchitis. He is badly affected by his old enemy,

cold, and he suffers terribly in the continuing severe winters. On 4 February 1799 he wrote 'The present cold weather almost kills me', and went on to expatiate on the sheer misery of the cold: 'Snow again this Evening – Frost also very sharp within Doors – Milk & Cream kept in the Kitchen'; rather than in the unheated dairy and even there it sometimes froze. A few days later: 'The very severe cold Weather that have [sic] so long prevailed, is to day if any thing, more piercing. I have felt it more to day, than any yet'. His nerves are so shaken that he is afraid of slipping and falling, if he dares to go outdoors. He connects this up with what he seems now convinced is epilepsy: '... having of late been very much afraid of having an Epileptic or falling fit – My Head inclining I have thought of late that way'. He realises what has happened to him, and writes merably: 'Fear seems to have got great Power over me of late Days'. Even at home these terrors pursue him still. One day he is so afraid of falling downstairs that he has to be helped down. And sometimes the hardest blow of all strikes him, and he loses his appetite, something that really makes him fall into the pathos of self-pity: 'I did not eat a bit of Pigg for Dinner, the Gout about me, getting more and more painfull – had some Water Gruel for Supper –'. Then still striving to look on the bright side, and eager to persuade himself that his state of health was not, after all, so bad, he ends with: 'Something better towards bed-time' – (20 November 1799).

The diary for 1800, 1801 and more than half of 1802 shows little variation. When Woodforde was feeling ill he wrote repetitively about the symptoms of his illnesses. But there were good days as well as bad days; ups and downs juxtaposed. He kept an eye on parish affairs, in which he no longer took any active part. There were still bills to pay and occasionally visitors to see, although the arrival of strangers, or even people he knew but had not seen for some time, made him nervous and 'hurried'. His relations with Nancy had long deteriorated, and he now sometimes called her 'A.M.W.' or even 'Miss Woodforde'. No longer did he play cribbage with her, or read to her out of the *History of England* that he had bought in Oxford, so many years ago. He accused her of being 'pert', 'saucy' and 'sulky'. When he suspected her of secret conversations with Betty Dade, 'above Stairs', he wrote the sentence in Greek characters, presumably because he thought if she went surreptitiously searching the diary she would take it for real Greek, and be put off.

Then in July or August 1802 Woodforde went down with some kind of throat trouble. We know nothing about the progress of this illness, because three pages, covering the dates 18 July to 28 August, were ripped out of the diary, leaving only the blotting paper with its weather notes for six weeks. There can hardly be any other explanation of this vandalism except that the missing pages contained allusions to a human body now near to its dissolution which were so shocking that their immediate destruction was thought imperative. As to the type of entry which might have provoked so exaggerated a reaction, on 22 October 1800 Woodforde had an involuntary emission of seminal fluid in the night. This surely would have gone, with the rest of the page that contained it, had the censor been able to understand the contracted Latin in which it is phrased.

By the time the surviving entries for August 1802 recommence, Woodforde's throat was healing. But from then on he began to go downhill very rapidly. He could not understand why, although at least on some days he 'eat very hearty', he gained no strength: 'Sometimes I think, I get weaker and weaker'. He was now in continuous pain from the 'blind piles'. He had to be helped up and down stairs. Then the characteristic œdema of 'dropsy', ascites, made its appearance, an infallible sign that, as his heart weakened, his circulation was giving up. The last phase of his terminal illness was no doubt written on two further pages, 5–10 October, which were torn out as the others had been. The weather notes continue to supply us with odd scraps of information, that show the household continuing its usual quiet routine although, like the Parson himself, it was nearing its end. A new yard boy, 'Jn. Lane', aged 13, arrived. Mr Emeris, one of the tithe-payers, 'brought us some Damson Plumbs', and 'Eliz: Gray (an Infant)' was buried by Mr Maynard, the poor clergyman often employed by Woodforde to do odd clerical jobs.

On Sunday 17 October 1802, he made his last incomplete entry in the diary over 43 years after he had started it with the great news from Oxford. For a long while now he had been accustomed to writing up the diary in two daily spells, one culminating in dinner and the other posted up just before he went to bed. Some time in the afternoon, he took his diary and wrote in it. His handwriting is the same as ever. I find myself unable to agree with others who have examined the manuscript and claim to find the latest entries to be in a shaky hand. He had a clean page to write on, p. 59 of the

last hard back book, and wrote at the top, with all his accustomed clarity of expression:

- October - We breakfasted, dined,
17th Very weak this Morning, scarce able to put on my Clothes
- 1802 - and with great difficulty, got down stairs with help -
- Sunday - M^r Dade read Prayers & Preached this Morning at Weston Church - Nancy at Church -
M^r & M^{rs} Custance & Lady Bacon at Church -
Dinner to day, Rost Beef -

On the blotting paper opposite he wrote down the first of the daily weather reports:

Morn' - fair & fine -
Afternoon -

Then he laid down his pen for ever.

Some time in the late afternoon or evening of that day James Woodforde had a seizure, probably a massive cerebral haemorrhage, from the effects of which he died (in the sense that he ceased finally to breathe, for his life effectually ended on the last day he wrote in his diary), ten weeks later, on the first day of the new year, at 'about a quarter after ten o'clock', as Nancy, who began a new pocket diary with those words, tells us.⁵ She had not been keeping any kind of diary in 1802, so there is no surviving mention of her uncle's last days or hours.

His funeral took place on 5 January 1803, and he was buried inside the church, in spite of the squire's formerly expressed disapproval of such unhygienic practices, about which he and the late rector had once had some disagreement. In time there appeared on the north wall of the chancel, just above Woodforde's grave, a small, unobtrusive and rather attractive wall-tablet, owing I think much to the popular designs of Wedgwood. The diarist would certainly have applied to it one of his favourite expressions of approbation, and called it 'neat'. He would have been perfectly right to do so.

The inscription, below the coat-of-arms his family pinched from the Ashby Folville people, reads:

SACRED
to the Memory of the
Rev^d Ja^s WOODFORDE
29 Years Rector of this Parish
who died January 1, 1803
aged 63 Years.

His parishioners held him in the
highest esteem and veneration and
as a tribute to his memory
followed him to the grave.
The poor feel a severe loss as they were
the constant objects
of his bounty

This tablet is erected
by his Nephew
WILLIAM & ANNA MARIA WOODFORDE
his Niece
as a token of their sincere
regard for his many
VIRTUES

As Dr Johnson so truly said, the maker of a lapidary inscription is not on oath. It is permissible to speculate on the feelings of the Weston villagers, as they 'followed him to the grave', if indeed they did so. They had certainly seen little of him in the last few years. As for his 'bounty', he left to the 'poor' of the parish just £5. He had always spent a certain amount of money on mostly random and casual acts of charity, but these proofs of his benevolence, though real enough, yet amounted only to a small part of his disposable income. In any case, he had not been around a great deal in the last six years to hand out a penny here, a sixpence there, to the unfortunates he chanced to meet.

We have the testimony of one parishioner. Some weeks after Woodforde died, Elizabeth Girling, the bright teen-aged youngest daughter of Mr Custance's land agent, who was herself to die tragically young of the common scourge, tuberculosis, was writing to her brother, to keep him abreast of the local news. 'We have lost Mr Woodforde', she writes chirpily, bracketing him with two other people who had also died in the recent past. Then she goes on to discuss the new rector. 'We are to have singing in Church', she proceeds, pinpointing one of the late Parson's more striking deficiencies. Although he had come from Oxford, where there was an abundance of good music, he had never troubled to provide any for his parish, and the only times they ever heard singing were when visiting choirs from other parishes took a hand in the services.

In her valediction Elizabeth plainly felt no more than any young girl who has, so she thinks, a whole long, wonderful life ahead of her could have felt for the passing of an elderly and reclusive man

whom she hardly knew. He had not taken a service in church for over seven years, and his participation in the life of the village, in these latter years, had been practically nil.

And it is likely, I think, that he was quickly forgotten in what had been his parish. At the most, a few old people would think kindly of him for his occasional charities, although he must have always been looked upon as a 'foreigner' in Norfolk, with his West Country accent and past history spent in places far away from their part of the world. The farmers may have been grateful to his memory as the clergyman who had never, in all the years he had been rector, increased the tithe burden, and contrasted that forbearance with the conduct of the new man, whose first action on being appointed was to double it all round.

The household of which the late Parson had been the head was quickly wound up and its members dispersed. Nancy, who recounts in her 'Lady's Pocket Companion' style diary that on 20 February she went to church with Bill 'for the first Time since my poor Uncle was buried', was 'very low' and 'Greatly affected at seeing my dear Uncles Grave to-day'. She had already paid off the servants (except the new boy who was probably sent back home as soon as Woodforde collapsed), since the receipts for their last year's wages, for which they as usual signed or made a mark, are made out in her hand. The servants were not left a penny in the Parson's Will; not even faithful Ben Leggett, who had been with him for 26 years at his unchanging wage of £10 a year. In June Sally Gunton was married to her 'Intended', Thomas Harrison the thatcher. Betty Dade was a bridesmaid, and signed as one of the witnesses.⁶ This was for long our last sighting of her; but fresh information which has only just come to light reveals that she did after all get married, but not to Ben. She became the wife of a Mr Baldwin, lived at Dereham and died in 1834, in her 70th year. Briton went to Norwich, where in 1812 he was still a servant.

The sale of the late Parson's effects spread over three days: 19th, 29th and 21st of April. A total of £437 was raised, less than one might have thought, considering the heavy inflation of the war years. A comparison with the diary reveals that some of the items brought in no more than their former owner had paid for them, years before. Bill and Nancy were the only legatees, apart from the 'poor' of the parish already mentioned; and the bequest scarcely amounted to a windfall, since the money accruing from the proceeds of the sale was offset by personal debts which amounted

to £250. It was fortunate for them, and particularly for Nancy, who had no money of her own, that they had the much more valuable 'Sussex Estate', left to them and their brother Samuel by their father, to fall back on.

It could not have taken long for practically every trace of James Woodforde's sojourn at Weston Longville to be obliterated, only his monument remaining to give posterity the bare statistics of his incumbency. The 73 small paperback and hardback volumes containing the priceless diary became William's property, and went back to Somerset with him. He may have vandalised a few entries in it that referred disparagingly to him (I do not think it was he who tore out the missing pages near to and at the end) but he must, I think, be forgiven, since he, and his son, and his grandson, and great-grandson all kept the record safe and preserved it for us.

And in the fulness of time the forgotten days of James Woodforde came gloriously back to life, to gladden the hearts of aftercomers who live in a different world from the one he knew and chronicled. The diary, after all, is his passport to immortality. It has become part of our historical inheritance.

References

1. *Oxford Diary*, 28/1/1762.
2. *Ibid*, 6/2/1762.
3. It is very clear that he did not have the 'grand mal' type of epilepsy, as suffered by his servant maid Anne Golding, but I understand it cannot altogether be ruled out that the fainting attacks were epileptiform in character.
4. John Corbould or Carbould was the son of a wealthy hatter in Norwich, 'from whom I have had many a Hat'. JW had first met him on 10/2/1794 after Corbould, just married, had taken over Hungate Lodge, former home of Press Custance, the squire's brother. Corbould later had two livings in Norfolk, and was patron of a third, of which the incumbent was his father-in-law. He died in 1810, aged 42.
5. *The Diary of a Country Parson*, Vol. V, Appendix I, 414.
6. Weston Longville Register, 16/1803. This wedding was conducted by Thomas Dade, the last of Woodforde's official curates.

A FRIEND IN DEED

Two hundred years have passed and the thoughts of Members turn to three significant dates: 17 October 1802 when James Woodforde made the last entry in the diary he had kept for 43 years, 1 January 1803 when he died and 5 January when he was buried under the chancel of All Saints Church, Weston Longville, Norfolk.

John Beresford's 5-volume edition of the diary gives us pretty well all the entries available from the beginning of July 1802 until the 18th, when three manuscript pages are missing, entries starting again on 29 August, during which time it is presumed that the diarist was ill. Fragments of the missing pages remain. Who tore them from the booklet and why? Two further manuscript pages were torn out carrying the entries for 5 to 16 October, leaving short notes on the interleaving pages.

During this time Mr Dadé, who had been curate at Weston since the end of May 1799 in place of the unreliable Mr Cotman, continued to 'read prayers and preach' on Sunday. Immediately after the service he would leave for Booton (where he held a curacy) or Yarmouth (where his mother and sisters lived) not to be seen in the parish until the next Sunday, except on the few occasions when he was invited to dine, mid-week, at Weston House. Any child requiring baptism was brought to the Sunday service, but who could the parish call upon when marriages were celebrated or parishioners buried?

John Cartwright Maynard, unmarried, lodging at the inn in nearby Attlebridge, so poor that he had no horse, whose name appeared at the foot of any subscription list, who hit the bottle, was dismissed by Roy Winstanley as '... the poor clergyman often employed by Woodforde to do odd clerical jobs.'¹ After James gave up his church duties, we can see from the diary and parish records that, apart from a few burials taking place on a Sunday, five marriages were conducted by Mr Corbould, two by Mr Dade (where the Custance and Girling families were involved) while 14 marriages and 20 burials were conducted by Mr Maynard up to 16 October 1802.

Woodforde met John Maynard on 28 September 1790. After discovering that he was serving (only once a fortnight) Attlebridge, Alderford, Morton and Ringland as curate, '... it being near my House I asked him to walk in which he did and drank a Glass of White Wine and eat some plumb Cake, then took a Walk with me

round my Garden and then left me ...'. They met again at the Archdeacon's Visitation at Reepham on 22 October, then at 6-monthly intervals at Generals and Visitations. It was after the meeting on 19 October 1792 and '... a very good dinner' at the King's Arms, Reepham that Maynard revealed his poverty, subscribing five shillings to the relief of French clergy while Woodforde and the others gave two guineas.

On 3 March next year Maynard sat in Mr Howlett's seat in All Saints, Weston to hear Woodforde preach and later attended a marriage ceremony there. Woodforde had signed his Testimonium after his presentation to the living of Morton and later advised him on a tricky Penance required to be served at Morton church. Their association was growing closer.

In January of the next year Woodforde was suffering from gout. All Saints, Weston was not being served and on 4 February Mr Custance arrived in Weston from Bath. All through that month there was no service in cold All Saints church and Woodforde wrote that he '... fully intended ... but ...'. Mr Custance must have let it be known that a Sunday service was expected for on 1 March Mr Corbould obliged with prayers and a sermon and the next Sunday Mr Stoughton of Sparham took the service. On Saturday 14 March 'Mr. Maynard called on me this Morning between 9 & 10 to let me know that he will do duty for me at Weston Church on Sunday Morn' next ...'. Mr Maynard was in!

On 12 June 1795 James, Nancy and Briton were packing their trunks in readiness for a holiday in Somerset from the 24th of that month until 4 November and Mr Maynard '... dined and spent the Afternoon with us ...'. Woodforde had appointed him curate in his absence and, as Briton was to be in Somerset for over four months, it may well be that Mr Maynard was asked also to keep an eye on the Parsonage. Everything was well and on 6 November he '... called on me also this Morning. I thanked him for serving my Church and gave him £10.0.0. He served Weston ... 19 Sundays ...'. According to the parish records, during that time Mr Maynard had baptised five children, married one couple and apparently, during the time of his curacy, no one in the parish died!

Later that day James appointed Mr Corbould, of Hungate Lodge, his curate at £30 per annum but at the end of the month he announced that, as his wife suffered so badly from the cold of Weston winters, they were removing to Norwich until the spring. Weston was without a resident curate.

During that winter Mr Corbould continued to serve the church at Weston and, when he was unable to get to the village, provided a substitute. In February 1796 he conducted a marriage, two baptisms were conducted privately in the Parsonage by the diarist and the burial service for John Thacker of Lyng was read by Mr Maynard, who was calling at the Parsonage for brief visits and to exchange gossip. One diary entry records a cosy evening when ‘... M^r. Stoughton of Sparham and M^r. Maynard of Attlebridge dined and spent the Afternoon and part of the Evening with us till after 9. After Coffee and Tea we played two Rubbers at Whist, M^r. Stoughton and self against Miss Woodforde and M^r. Maynard.’²

The end of May came and the Corboulds had still not returned to Hungate Lodge. Mr Maynard read prayers and administered the Sacrament at Weston and then, as James tell us, ‘... applied to me for my interest at the ensuing County Election for Sir John Wodehouse and Thomas Hare Esq.’; and, ‘Soon after M^r. Stoughton called on me and desired that I would vote for M^r. Coke ...’. Later, ‘... M^r. Girling came and informed us that he had heard from M^r. Custance and he desired M^r. Girling to get all the Votes he could for Sir John Wodehouse ...’. James knew what to do!

Mr Corbould remained curate at Weston until November 1797 when he finally quit Hungate Lodge. After several applications for the curacy and some disappointments, Mr Cotman was appointed although he did not intend to live in Weston. His misdemeanours, which were many are recorded in the diary. On several occasions he arrived well before the appointed time for service, and the congregation arrived as the service finished. On some Sundays he did not arrive at all and failed to provide a substitute. He read prayers but had no sermon with him; there was no service on Good Friday. He was not liked by the parish. Mr Custance was angry and James was worried. Mr Cotman ‘read prayers and preached’ for the last time on 26 May 1799. During his time as Woodforde’s curate he had baptised the children of the parish, Mr Maynard had officiated at eight marriages in All Saints church and conducted eight burials in the churchyard.

At this time John Maynard was a frequent visitor to the Parsonage. He went on errands for the diarist, brought back books for Nancy on his visits to Norwich, walking the nine miles there and back. He dined at Weston House in company with Nancy and Bill and was witness to James’ will.³ After the experience of Mr Cotman’s curacy it is hard to understand why the diarist did not offer the

vacancy to this hardworking, reliable and local man. Perhaps he did but his offer of £30 a year could not persuade Maynard to add the burden to the four parishes he already served (and there was the lucrative parish of Haveringland in the offing). We know nothing of his private life; whether he eventually had enough resources to buy a horse; whether he married. In the diary we can read of only two occasions when he visited the Parsonage accompanied by a lady. On 18 July 1798 'Mr. Maynard with a Mrs. Howell & Daughter from London with Miss Green of Attlebridge and a Miss — desired the Liberty of taking a Walk round my Garden this Morning which after they had done I desired them to walk into my Parlour and have some Refreshment which they did ...'. Again, on 24 June 1802, '... Mr. Maynard with Green's Daughter of Attlebridge, a sensible young Woman, came here this Morning on a Walk to see my Garden etc. ... I gave them some refreshment ...'. In an article 'The Social Scene — Curates, Friends & Others'⁴ Roy Winstanley traced his life from his birth on 15 May 1746, through the possibility that he had spent years as an 'Usher' or under-master in a school before he was enrolled at Caius, Cambridge, as a 'sizar' and 'ten-year man' in 1786. An obituary in the *Gentlemen's Magazine* gave the date of his death as 28 December 1804 at Alderford, near to Weston.⁵

Thomas Dade, the son of a farmer and nephew to Dr Turner, the dean of Norwich, also a Caius man (but admitted as a pensioner) accepted the curacy and 'read prayers and preached' for the first time at the beginning of June 1799. Mrs Custance and Nancy were at church to hear him '... and spoke much in his favour'. James was '... very glad that he gives such satisfaction'. But not residing in Weston had its drawbacks and John Maynard continued to officiate at most of the marriages and conducted all funerals.

The year 1801 began: the last full year of the diary. Mr Dade continued to 'read prayers and preach' to everyone's satisfaction, except that few attended church when the weather was bad. Mr Maynard continued his regular calls at the Parsonage. Nancy drank more port wine than usual in an effort to cure her rheumatism and in April (later to become the month in which a national census was taken in the first year of each decade) '... Young Stephen Andrews called on me this Morning bringing me an Account of the Number of Inhabitants of the Parish, Males & Females ...'. So we have that interesting document revealing the names of all families living in Weston in 1801, together with the number of persons in each

household. Few parishes have this useful information for so early a date.

By July Woodforde was complaining of 'strange sensations' and '... a very great kind of weakness and use of my right hand ...'. A new puppy, Mab, arrived to replace the unfortunate Polcat who had died in a trap at Weston House. And almost at the same time the agitated Mrs Custance and Lady Bacon, frightened by a cow, had to be calmed by a 'Glass of Port Wine and other refreshment'. Mr Maynard 'disguised in Liquor' (and observed by the ladies!) dined at the Parsonage and after a substantial meal and a few hours of home comforts '... left us about 7 this Evening and perfectly sober & well.' In earlier years the diarist would have heaped criticism on a drunken guest.

During the next month both men were worried by the arrival of '... a large Parcel of Papers ... containing directions in case of an Invasion with a Letter from the Bishop requesting the Clergy to be attentive and active in the same.' Woodforde said: 'It hurried and affected me a great deal indeed'. He said of Maynard that '... he had been much hurried & fatigued concerning the Papers he lately received in case of an Invasion by the French and Dutch on this Coast ... He looked very sadly I thought.' Woodforde had sent his 'papers' to Mr Custance by Ben. They were passed on to Mr Girling for attention. Maynard had to deal with the 'papers' personally, and on foot!

1802, the last year of the diary began. James was housebound, only occasionally taking a few steps in the garden of the Parsonage. Almost every day he recorded visits from members of the Custance family, neighbours and friends, all bearing gifts of food, game and fruit. Newspapers told him what happened nationally and locally. John Maynard kept him up to date and officiated at marriages and funerals within the parish. On Sundays Thomas Dade 'read prayers and preached' before returning home. He dined with James and Nancy in May and received his half-year's salary of £15.

We have the privilege of learning most details of 43 years of the diarist's life: of the last 10½ weeks we know nothing. One of Nancy's diaries tells us what happened on 1 January 1803, the Weston register the event of 5 January and a note in Nephew Bill's handwriting records his journey from Somerset to be with his sister. Two hundred years later this is an effort to fill in the gaps.

James' neat writing is found completing the parish register for the

first quarter of 1802. Until books of printed forms became available for the keeping of parish records, details were noted on separate sheets and generally entered into the parish register quarterly or half-yearly (in the case of Weston, into the handsome book presented to the church by the squire in 1783, the first entry being the baptism of his daughter Frances Ann). The diarist's neat hand in straight, evenly spaced lines, is unmistakable but the entries from 13 October 1802 to 15 May 1803 appear to be in two separate hands, probably Thomas Dade's and John Maynard's, and the burials are dated 5 January (Woodforde's), 6 February (squeezed in a tight space), two dated 14 February, two dated 15 May, followed by 27 March. John Dell, who was to become the next Rector of Weston, signed the foot of the page but presumably this was done much later.

Mr Dade and Mr Maynard continued to officiate at marriages during 1803. John Wilson appears to have taken on the curacy of Weston during 1804. This is the Revd Mr Wilson Jnr, of Elsing, curate to Henry Bathurst who sent a letter to the diarist early in 1776 '... to desire my Leave once more for him to live in my House at Weston till Lady Day next His Father & him having had a second Quarrel after his marrying a Girl which his Father objects to ...'. (John Wilson married Elizabeth Crofts on 7 February 1776 at Swanton Morley by licence. One of the witnesses to the marriage was Mr Hammerton of the Lyng papermill.) When Frances Ann Custance married Robert Marsham on 26 June 1804 Philip Candler, Rector of Buxton Lammas (near the parish of Stratton Strawless where the Marshams Lived) officiated. No doubt the squire, who appears to have kept a strict eye on the smooth running of church affairs, was relieved when eventually Mr Dell settled in the parish late in 1805. From then on well-spaced lines were ruled in the parish register; one hand made the entries; order was restored.

We come back to the question, who conducted James' funeral service on 5 January 1803? Mr Custance had already put a stop to burials within the church and he would have been consulted for permission to break the ground so that the Rector of All Saints, Weston Longville for over a quarter of a century, could lie within his chancel. Perhaps he sent post-haste to Mr Dade to instruct him to return. Without the diary's weather notes and the daily comments on the bitterness of Norfolk winters, we cannot know if Mr Dade could have made the journey. Since we do not know, let us concede that Woodforde's kind, obliging, clerical friend, John Cartwright

Maynard, probably conducted that last service he could give and trudged back sorrowing, to his lonely lodgings.

Notes

1. *Parson Woodforde – The Life and Times of a Country Diarist*. Roy Winstanley. Morrow & Co, 1996. For a fuller account of John Cartwright Maynard's clerical career see Journal XVI, No. 1, Spring 1983 (Roy Winstanley), where the late Editor of our Journal is kinder to the memory of 'Mr. Maynard' than in his book.
 2. 29 May 1796.
 3. 29 April 1799. '... I made a new Will this Morning and had it signed sealed & delivered before proper Witnesses before I went to bed to Night ... Rather poorly to day, giddy and low spirited.'
 4. Journal XVI, No. 1, Spring 1983.
 5. I have been unable to trace John Maynard's burial at Alderford from the parish records.
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WOODFORDE'S CLOCKS: A REVIEW AND SOME NEW IDEAS

Introduction

One of the pleasures of belonging to our Society is to learn of the many diverse interests of our members. For example, in the course of our meetings, one may well pass by a dinner table, or by a grouping almost anywhere – perhaps clasping sandwiches or cups of tea – and overhear snatches of conversation in which words such as 'escapement', 'front-plate', and 'movement' occur frequently; this is our 'clock group' and after the formal programme of the day they may well all disappear – to fall upon some unsuspecting time-piece of interest which is to be found nearby. The history of Woodforde's clocks of course has been a topic of interest for this group.

Our readers will be aware that there have been several articles in the Journal or Newsletter in the last few years concerning Woodforde's clocks. Certain clocks, described retrospectively, or newly discovered, have become candidates for identification as Woodforde's 'very neat Clock' made by John Symonds of Reepham, which we assume would have stood in the hall at Weston Longville rectory. It is believed that it was *this* clock which was sold to a Mr Neal at the auction of Woodforde's effects which took place after his death in 1802.

The story really begins in 1776:

Mr. Symonds of Reepham brought home my new Clock, to
Day and put the same up – for which I paid him – 6: 6: 0
It is a very neat Clock and I like it much –

(Diary: 31 August 1776)

We should note two clues provided by this entry: it was necessary for Mr Symonds to ‘put the same up’ – suggesting that this was a sizeable clock which may have been transported in several parts; secondly, we should notice that the price paid for the clock was a considerable sum for the time. This is all consistent with the assumption that this was a rather fine eight-day longcase clock which Woodforde would probably have placed in a conspicuous position in his home and most likely in the hall.

We know, incidentally, that there was *already* an important clock in the house before the event described above as Mr Symonds called ‘setting my Clock right &c.’ on 7 June 1776.

In this article I shall attempt to review what has been written before about Woodforde’s clocks and to present some new ideas about the history of one of the newly discovered clocks – which may well be Woodforde’s ‘very neat Clock’ made by Mr Symonds and installed by him in August 1776.

How Many Clocks?

In trying to understand how many clocks there were in Woodforde’s home at Weston we have three principal sources: the diary itself, the notice of the sale of Woodforde’s effects after his death in 1803, and the inventory of the items actually sold at this auction.

I have no special knowledge of clocks or their makers, but I would respectfully beg to differ from the earlier proposals of Mr Clifford Bird, an authority on Norfolk clocks and clockmakers, who has suggested that Woodforde had *four* clocks in the house, including *two* longcase clocks.¹ I would also draw attention to the error in Mr Jim Holmes’ article in which he stated that there were ‘just two clocks’ sold at the auction in 1803.²

I suggest that there were in fact *three* clocks in the house when Woodforde died and that these are the same three clocks which appear in the sale inventory.³ The sale took place at the house over three days, 19–21 April 1803, and the clocks mentioned were as follows:

A 'Wood Clock' in the 'Kitchen'

sold for 12/6d to a Mr Reeve

Lot 40 on Day 2

An 'Eight-day clock' in the 'Hall'

sold for £4.13.0 to a Mr Neal

Lot 75 on Day 2

A 'Bracket clock, with chimes, on mahogany bracket' on the 'Stair Case'

sold for £3.3.0 to a Mr Girling

Lot 129 on Day 2

Notice of this sale, which had previously appeared in a local newspaper, mentioned among a list of the principal items for sale, a 'bracket clock' and an 'eight-day clock'.⁴

If Woodforde had other timepieces in the house when he died, besides those listed above and excluding his watch, they must have been removed prior to the sale by Nancy or Bill. I assume that for sentimental reasons one of them *did* retain Woodforde's watch. However, we should question why either Nancy (a much distressed middle-aged lady at the time), or Bill (far from home) would wish to remove a sizeable clock from the house after Woodforde's death?

I therefore suggest that there is no evidence that there were *two* large clocks in the house as suggested by Mr Bird.¹ He proposed that there were two longcase clocks – one 'below stairs', the other in the hall, but I suggest that these were one and the same.

My proposal, however, must be consistent with references which Woodforde himself made to his various clocks. I think it is. On various dates Mr Symonds (or 'Simonds') called at the house to reset or clean Woodforde's clocks and some of the references found to these and other events have been listed in Figure 1. I suggest that references 2, 4, 5, 7 and 9 all relate to the best clock in the house, the one delivered by 'Mr Symonds of Reepham' in 1776. Note in particular reference 9 which is clearly the Symonds clock.⁵ This was 'below stairs' which *might* be interpreted to mean that it was in the servants quarters; but why should Woodforde thus dispose of his 'very neat Clock'? I believe, in this instance, that Woodforde was just indicating that the clock was *not* upstairs, differentiating it from his 'upper Clock'.⁶

In addition, I suggest that references 1, 3, 6, 8, 10 and 11, including 'my Spring Clock' and 'my upper Clock' are to the bracket clock, which at auction was the one item recorded as being on the 'Stair Case'. Thus the Symonds clock would appear to be 'my lower Clock' and the bracket clock 'my upper Clock'. References 12 and 13 clearly refer to both clocks.

References to clocks reset or cleaned by Mr. Symonds, or otherwise mentioned on the dates indicated:

My Ref	Woodforde's Description	Date of the Event	My proposed Designation
1	setting my Clock	7 June 1776	B
2	delivery of a very neat Clock	31 August 1776	A
3	my Spring Clock	4 May 1780	B
4	my lower Clock	6 March 1782	A
5	my lower Clock	14 January 1784	A
6	my upper clock	25 October 1788	B
7	my large Clock	6 February 1789	A
8	my Spring Clock	17 November 1789	B
9	my eight Day Clock below Stairs which he made	19 November 1790	A
10	my upper Clock	21 March 1791	B
11	my upper clock	16 December 1791	B
12	both my Clocks	26 January 1792	A B
13	both my eight day Clocks	16 December 1794	A B

A: An eight-day clock made by Symonds and delivered in August 1776, located in the Hall at the 1803 sale.

B: The "second hand Spring Clock" purchased in Oxford in 1774 which appears as the Bracket clock, located on the Stair Case at the 1803 sale.

Figure 1: Some References to Woodforde's Clocks found in his Diary

However, for all this to be fully consistent, the 'spring clock' has to be one of the *two* eight-day clocks which Mr Symonds cleaned in December 1794 (Figure 1, Reference 13). As far as I am aware there is no reason why this should not be the bracket clock which appeared at the auction; a bracket clock could surely be spring driven and have an eight-day mechanism. This was probably the 'Spring Clock' which Woodforde had purchased in Oxford:

Paid M^r. Locke Silversmith in High Street this morn' for a second hand Spring Clock, which I have had this Term, & which belonged to a M^r. Route in the Corn-Markett – the Sum of –

5: 5: 0.

(Diary: 10 May 1774)

This clock was almost certainly the one sent to Weston in 1776:

M^r. Lock sent my Clock by Jones's Waggon to day to Weston.
Sent my Pictures also by Jones's Waggon to day.

(Diary: 18 May 1776)

We know, incidentally, that the 'upper Clock' was comparatively small from the following diary entry:

Sent Briton this Morning to Reepham *on foot* [my italics]
with my upper clock to clean by Symonds

(Diary: 16 December 1791)

I doubt whether Mr Symonds was ever troubled to clean the 'Wood clock' sold at auction for 12/6d. Mr Bird has suggested¹ that this was a Black Forest clock and the one mentioned by Woodforde in 1790:

To a young Man that travels the Country on foot selling
Wooden Clocks that go for 12. hours, for one of them
as I thought it ingenious paid 0.12.0 (Diary: 26 March 1790)

At the auction this clock was in the Kitchen and it may have been used there to time culinary processes rather than to ascertain the time of day with any accuracy.

A Taxing Conundrum

We are provided with one other tantalising clue to the number of clocks and watches in Woodforde's household when he paid his taxes in 1798:

Paid Js. Pegg, this Morning, for old Taxes	8. 17. 3½.
Ditto – do – for Clock and Watches	1. 11. 0½.
Do. new assessed Taxes	4. 4. 3.

Do. – Cavalry 1. 0. 9.

In all paid Js. Pegg this Morning 15. 13. 4.

(Diary: 24 April 1798)⁷

The tax on timepieces, introduced in 1797, was levied as follows: 'Clocks paid 5s. each, and watches 10s. and 2s. 6d. according as they were gold or silver'.⁸ It will be apparent that the strange sum of £1. 11. 0½ cannot be compounded from multiples of these various amounts and this wonderful opportunity thus seems to escape us. It is clear that the total tax in this category to be paid for one year should have been some multiple of 2s. 6d. It is possible that the tax had been calculated for the *exact* period for which it was due, or some small charge may have been added to the total.

Curiously, however, Beresford notes that 'Parson Woodforde is paying retrospectively' and it is possible that Woodforde is being charged 3½% interest on an overdue tax of 30 shillings; this would amount to 12.5 pence, or 1s. 0½d. to the nearest halfpenny, bringing the total to exactly £1. 11. 0½. A *net* tax charge of 30 shillings could be calculated as the sum due for three clocks at 5s., plus one gold watch at 10s., plus two silver watches at 2s. 6d. But this is just one solution.⁹ I am not aware that Woodforde ever described his watch as a *gold* watch although we may speculate that he still owned the Pinchbeck watch which he purchased in 1767:

I changed my old Silver Watch this morning with

Locke the Silversmith for a new Pinchback [sic]

one and to boot paid him 2: 2: 0 (Diary: 27 April 1767)

Perhaps Woodforde preferred to fork out the tax for a 'gold' watch rather than admit to owning one of an inferior metal, albeit of a gold colour?¹⁰

Whatever the explanation, if Woodforde and Nancy owned *three* watches between them, one gold (or Pinchbeck) and two silver, or there were three such watches in the total household, then we may have the answer. This peculiar new tax was a disastrous failure and was repealed in the very month that Woodforde paid this strange amount.¹¹

Woodforde's Eight-day Clock: What do we actually know about it?

In the following discussion I exclude Woodforde's bracket clock which was on the 'Stair Case' at the sale (although this was probably also an eight-day clock) and we are only concerned with the clock which was in the Hall and sold to 'Mr. Neal' for £4. 13. 0.

Woodforde only described it as 'my eight Day Clock below Stairs' and never used the word 'longcase', a description which may date from after his time. This clock was definitely the clock made by Symonds of Reepham (Figure 1, Reference 9). However, as it was necessary for Mr Symonds to 'put the same up' and as Woodforde also described it as his 'large clock' it is *assumed* that this was what would now be known as a longcase clock.

The case of the clock was almost certainly *not* made of mahogany. Whereas Woodforde always proudly identified his *mahogany* furniture he gives no such description to his 'very neat Clock'. In the sale inventory, no less than 24 lots are designated 'Mahogany ...' and this probably reflects the enhanced quality with which this wood was associated; the clock, by contrast, appears as just an 'Eight-day clock' from which we can surely be fairly confident that it was *not* made of mahogany. In the newspaper notice of the sale of Woodforde's effects, in which some of the principal items for sale were listed, we find 'mahogany dining, tea and card tables, mahogany bureau and book-case, ditto chairs, wardrobe, and commode sideboard'; even the bracket clock is carefully noted as being 'on mahogany bracket' – but once again the second clock is included as just an 'eight-day clock'.⁴

A clock of this kind would certainly have a striking mechanism, but the bracket clock we know was described at the sale in 1803 as also being 'with chimes'. However, on the following occasions, Woodforde may well have been referring to the clock¹² in the hall:

M^r. Symonds Clock Maker at Reepham came to alter my
Clock this morning, as it does not strike at all –

(Diary: 11 January 1777)

M^r. Custance made us a morning Visit and stayed
with us till after our Clock had struck 3. –

(Diary: 30 January 1787)

This is all the information we have, so that should this clock be found, it has to be a Symonds clock, of a design and mechanism consistent with its construction in or about 1776. It must be an eight-day clock and we can probably expect it to be a striking longcase clock *not* constructed of mahogany.

Woodforde's Eight-day Longcase Clock: the Candidates

As far as I am aware there have been three candidate clocks – for which claims have been made, at various levels of detail, with respect to their provenance. It is certainly reasonable to suppose

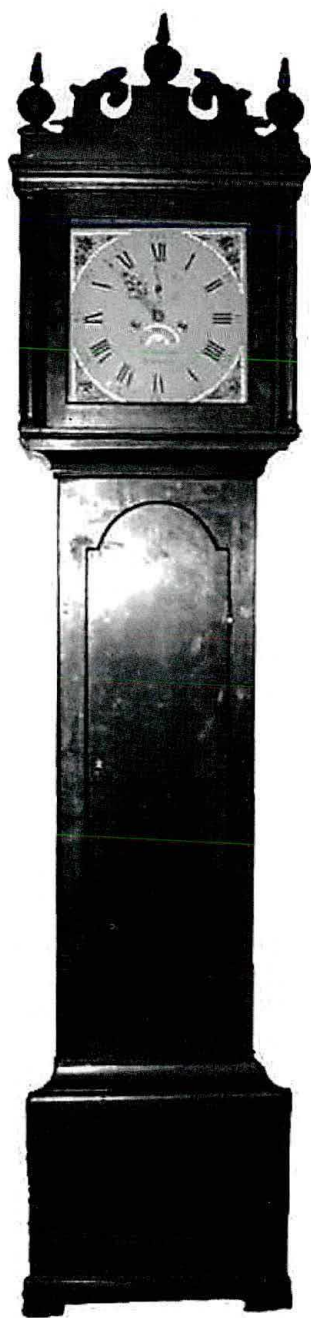
that a really fine clock of this kind would have survived over a period of two and a quarter centuries and it is also reasonable to expect that such a clock may not have travelled far from its original home.

The first clock

The first clock to be 'discovered' was drawn to the attention of one of our members, Mr Jim Holmes, after he had given a talk about Parson Woodforde. It was found to be a 'long case clock ... in a rather plain case and with a very faded painted face, obviously a timepiece suitable for a kitchen or the back premises'.² The name of the clockmaker, though very faded, could be discerned as 'John Simmonds, Reepham'. A Mrs Brand (who apparently died in 1930) had told of her husband's family buying a clock 'at the sale in Weston following the death of its Rector in the early 1800s'.² These few words seem *very* persuasive and return to haunt me from time to time. However, it is of course quite possible that *other* sales took place after the demise of *later* rectors. As I understand matters, this clock is thought unlikely to have been Woodforde's clock, based upon an assessment of its style – deemed to be later than 1800 – and its modest construction.¹³ I wonder why the maker's name was spelt 'Simmonds' when it was usually spelt 'Symonds'? Before leaving this story it is of interest to note that a Mr and Mrs Brand *did* attend the sale of Woodforde's effects in 1803 and made four modest purchases amounting to a total of £2. 12. 6 – but they certainly didn't purchase one of the clocks.

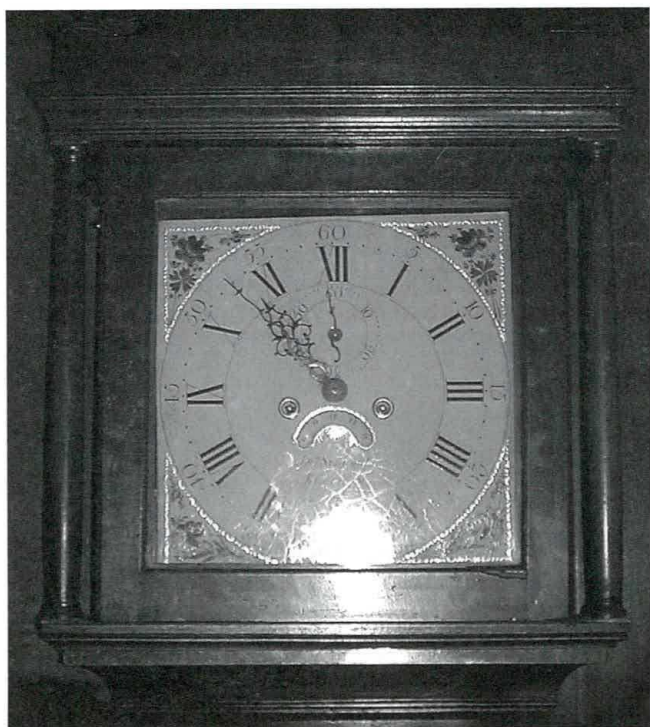
The second clock

The second clock to be found was in the possession of a Mr Arthurton, living a few miles from Weston. It was claimed that this clock had been passed down in the family and the earliest known owner was believed to have been one Peter Arthurton (or Atterton) born at Weston in 1833.¹⁴ The dial bears the inscription 'Jⁿ Symonds Reepham'. When the clock was taken to be cleaned the clockmaker became quite excited when he found the number 'SY No. 8' on the front plate and this was deemed to be an 'early' number for a Symonds clock. In addition, scratched on the front plate was 'SY 94' and it is speculated that this may be a record left by John Symonds himself when he had repaired or cleaned the clock. We know of course that Symonds cleaned Woodforde's clocks in December 1794 (Figure 1, Reference 13). A further mark found was 'Woolmer June 23rd 1815'. James Shreeve Woolmer



The "second clock"

*(reproduced by kind
permission of
Mr Tony Brundell)*



The face of the 'second clock'
(reproduced by kind permission of Mr Tony Blundell)

took over the business in Market Square Reepham when John Symonds (senior) retired in 1814.¹⁵ Mr Bird, who has been mentioned above, an authority on Norfolk clockmakers, was consulted and he has concluded that this could well have been Woodforde's clock; everything about it, we are advised, is 'right' for the period 1770-1800. Reassuringly, the case of this clock is made of oak and I have argued above that it is very likely that Woodforde's clock was made of some wood other than mahogany. The link with Woodforde of course remains speculative and one has to wonder just how many clocks John Symonds supplied to his customers and just how many clocks he may have cleaned in 1794? This clock (see illustrations) has been purchased by one of our members, Mr Tony Blundell, who hopes in due course to learn more about its detailed provenance. What we really need of course are the account books for James Shreeve Woolmer – so that we could learn just *whose* clock he had cleaned on 23 June 1815.

The third clock

About the third clock we know very little but this is yet another intriguing story. One of our members reported that his father had 'purchased a Simonds clock from a Miss Neal of Attlebridge'.¹⁶ A 'Mr Neal' of course had been the purchaser of Woodforde's clock in 1803 – and Attlebridge is but a stone's throw from Weston. The history of this particular clock is, however, now seemingly out of reach; the member who related the above account has since died and the clock 'passed into unknown hands over thirty years ago'.¹⁶ Some believe that the coincidence of the name Neal must surely make this a prime contender as Woodforde's clock, but we should note that the name Neal, although not apparently a Weston name, is not a rare name.

With just these three examples, it will be apparent that the identification of *any* clock as Woodforde's clock may always be hedged about with doubts and difficulties. If only James Woodforde had inscribed his initials on the back of the clock – and recorded the event in his diary!

Who was Mr Neal?

This essay now departs from the history of Woodforde's clocks as may be assembled from the various sources available to us and moves into areas of speculation.

All earlier attempts to identify 'Mr Neal' who purchased Woodforde's clock in 1803 have so far proved fruitless and this is hardly surprising as we do not have his first name. Even the exact spelling of the surname may be in doubt as the clerk at the sale recorded it both as 'Neal' and 'Neale'. A Mr Neal purchased the eight-day clock for £4. 13. 0 and a Yellow quilt for £1. 18. 0; the same (?) Mr Neale also secured a 'Four post bedstead, yellow furniture' for £5. 16. 0 and I am persuaded that this was the same man, as the yellow quilt would seem to belong with the bedstead. He thus spent a total of £12. 7. 0 which was a very considerable sum in 1803; about a year earlier Woodforde had paid a *year's wages* to his two men – one received £10 and the other £8. We must therefore assume that Mr Neal(e) was somewhat well-to-do and it would seem that he may have been buying these articles for his own use, or as a gift for a close relation. His limited number of purchases suggest that he wasn't a dealer – and we note that a Mr Rump purchased about thirty articles, including most of the mahogany furniture; the latter was surely the principal dealer

present at the sale.

The name Neal(e) occurs quite frequently in Norfolk (there are about 1000 entries in the 1851 census index) and to identify our Mr Neal would seem to be an impossible task. Woodforde makes reference to a 'Neale of Reephram, net maker' (Diary: 19 October 1779) and also to 'Saml. Neale, Husbandman of Lenewade Bridge', but these seem unlikely candidates; the latter was given 2/6d by Woodforde when he lost a cow (Diary: 24 February 1795). James Neal and Elizabeth (née Spelman) had children baptised at Lyng in the period 1804-1813, but according to the register he was a labourer and not the comparatively well-to-do individual we are probably seeking. A Martha Neale of Weston was married there to a Thomas Sissons on 7 October 1785 but this appears to have been an isolated event. A Wm. Neale, beerhouse keeper of Great Witchingham, is listed in White's 1845 Directory for Norfolk.

There was no Neal(e) recorded as a head of household in the 1801 census for Weston and this name very rarely occurs in the Weston registers. No burial in this name is to be found at Weston from 1803 up to 1850. It therefore seems likely that a 'Mr Neal' must have come from elsewhere. Some new ideas about the possible identity of a 'Mr Neal(e)' will be discussed below.

The Sale of 1803

It is appropriate at this stage in my story to relate a few details of the records of this sale. The auctioneer, a Mr W. Parson, had come from 'Attleburgh' and presumably brought his clerk along with him. I was particularly interested to notice from the transcript of the sale records that the clerk did not always manage to complete his record for each sale.³ He was presumably anxious to note the sums of money paid for each item but some of the *names* are missing and against a few lots the apparently harassed clerk writes just 'Mr'. At the end of each day's proceedings the purchaser would pay his money and be given a receipt for the Lot purchased; this would enable him to claim the article concerned and carry it away. The sums of money to be collected were therefore probably of the first importance to the clerk, but the names of the buyers would also normally be recorded. Under time constraints, the sums to be paid were probably secured as the first consideration and in the heat of the moment some of the names were clearly missed.

In addition, a notable feature of these records is that there are about a dozen instances where surnames were written down (against

several purchases) with *different* spellings: thus for example we find Emmery, Emery, and Emmory – Neal and Neale – Howlett and Howlet – Foster and Fostor – Cantrill and Gantrill. Similarly, several names have been apparently misspelt and we find for example: Woodford [Woodforde], Salesbury [Salisbury], Custins Press [Press Custance?], and Richman [Richmond]. The clerk would not be familiar with the local names and no doubt had to quickly write down what he heard. The possible significance of these observations will be revisited below.

The Arthurton Family

Having been drawn into discussions about the history of the clock currently favoured as being Woodforde's clock – the second in my account above which had been owned by the Arthurton family – it seemed plausible to look for some family connection between the Arthurtons and 'Mr Neal' who had purchased Woodforde's clock in 1803. Had an Arthurton married a Neal? Had the clock passed into the Arthurton family as part of a bequest?

To cut a very long story short, it can be reported that to date no such association has been established and it would be tedious to set out all the details; the surname Neal does not appear in the direct line of the Arthurton family history. One simple fact, however, should not be overlooked – the Arthurton family in which the clock was passed down from one generation to the next – are undoubtedly descended from the Arthurton family living at Weston in the early nineteenth century. Their forebears were certainly living there at the time of the sale in 1803.

In tracing the history of the Arthurton family one particular surname of interest has emerged. It will be recalled that the clock at the centre of this story was said to have been passed down in the Arthurton family (this surname is found recorded as Arthurton, Arterton, and Atterton) and the earliest known owner was thought to have been one Peter Arthurton born in 1833. He was in fact baptised 14 April 1833 at Weston as Peter Atterton and it quickly emerged that his paternal grandmother was a Mary *Newell* who married Thomas Arthurton at Weston in 1790. The structure of part of this family is set out in Figure 2 and I will refrain from reiterating the details here.

Peter Atterton's father, his paternal grandfather, and his son are all described in church registers or census records as labourers and, with no disrespect to this family, they are unlikely to have

Weston
18.10.1790

Thomas Arthurton = Mary Newell

bap Weston 17.2.1771

Probably the Thos.
Arthurton Junr. in
the 1801 census for
Weston.

1841: Ag Lab at Weston

born about 1767

Banns and Marriage state
both of this Parish

Mary Atterton buried at
Weston 23.1.1837 aged 70

Lyng
30.5.1826

William Arterton = Elizabeth Isbell

born 7.3.1804 and bap at
Weston the son of Thomas
Arthurton and Mary
late Newell.

1833: Labourer of Weston

1851 census: Widower at
Lyng aged 49 (Arterton),
born Weston

bap at Lyng 27.1.1805

died 29.4.1844 aged 39
at Lyng wife of William
Arterton, Labourer

Peter Atterton = Emily Just

bap 14.4.1833 at Weston
son of William (Labourer)
and Elizabeth Atterton

1881: Farm Bailiff at
World's End Farm, Sall

First known owner of the
eight-day clock?

Banns at Lyng October
& November 1855: both
single, of Lyng

***Figure 2: The Arthurton Family
Showing Descent from Mary Newell***

purchased an expensive longcase clock. Did it pass into this family from a Newell? Was our 'Mr Neal' who purchased the clock at the Woodforde sale actually a 'Mr Newell'? And here we come back to our harassed clerk at the sale in 1803: did the purchaser of the clock shout out his name across a crowded room as 'Newell' and the clerk hastily wrote down what he heard – Neal (or Neale)? My Norfolk friends may have a better idea how the name Newell may have been pronounced; did it sound like 'Newl' I wonder?

Again, it would be tedious to set out my attempts to find further links between the Newell and Arthurton families. The small number of Newell wills brought to probate in the period 1803-1857 do not indicate bequests from a Newell to an Arthurton family, and indeed the clock could have changed hands as an unrecorded inheritance or as a gift at some time, possibly as a wedding gift which will never be traced.^{17,18}

But who was Mary Newell?

Mary Newell and Thomas Arthurton were married at Weston 18 October 1790 by James Woodforde:

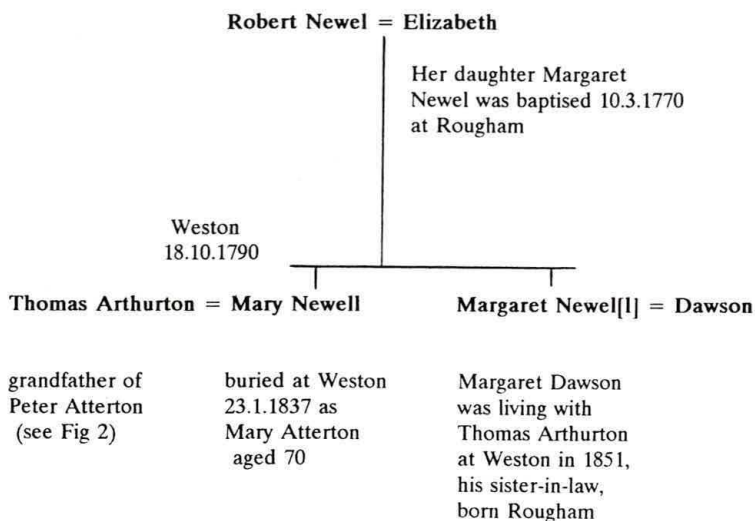
I walked to Weston Church this morning about 11. o'clock and there married Thomas Arthurton and Mary Newel, both single Persons, by banns, for which I received only 0. 2. 6 having recd. half a Crown before on their banns –
(Diary: 18 October 1790)

Beresford gives the name as Newel whereas it is recorded as Newell in both the marriage register and banns. As Newell is not a 'Weston' name I had hoped that the banns might tell us that Mary Newell came from some other parish – but they state that Thomas Atterton [sic] and Mary Newell were both single and 'of this Parish'. Both the marriage and the banns entries are signed by James Woodforde.¹⁹

Mary Newell could not sign her name when married but I think we have to accept that Newell was the correct spelling and this is confirmed by the baptisms of her seven children at Weston; over a period of 14 years four children were baptised by Woodforde and three baptised by others, and on every occasion the mother's maiden name was recorded as 'Newell'. Over the period 1803-1850 there is only one burial at Weston which would fit for Mary and this occurred in 1837: Mary Atterton of Weston was buried January 23 aged 70. This would suggest she was born about 1767 and would have been about 23 when married in 1790; this all fits together and is consistent with the fact that her husband Thomas appears in the 1841 census without a wife and in 1851 is described as a widower.

I have searched for the baptism of Mary Newell at Weston and in over a dozen neighbouring parishes without success.^{20,21} There was no Newell in the 1801 census for Weston, in the Land Tax records for 1798, or in the 1802 Poll.²² As far as I can ascertain, apart from the marriage of Mary Newell and the baptism of her children, the name Newell does not appear in Woodforde's diary. Mary Newell may have been 'of this Parish' when she was married at Weston in 1790, but she must surely have come to Weston from elsewhere.

New information has very recently come to light which probably establishes the parentage of Mary Newell. In the 1851 census Mary's widowed husband Thomas Arthurton is to be found at Weston. Living in his household was one Margaret Dawson, a widow aged 79, sister-in-law to the head of the household; her birthplace was given as Rougham. Margaret Dawson must have been the sister of Thomas' deceased wife Mary and therefore Margaret Newell before marriage.^{23,24}



Margaret Newell. However, the IGI contains entries for Rougham for the short period of 1769-1770.²⁵ Here we find:

Margaret Newel daughter of Robert Newel and Elizabeth
baptised 10 March 1770

However, we can now be confident that Mary's father was the same Robert Newel(l) of Rougham (Figure 3.) Rougham is some 18 miles from Weston – but could Robert Newel have been visiting his married daughter Mary at Weston in April 1803? did he purchase Woodforde's clock and the 'Four post bedstead, yellow furniture' as gifts for his daughter?

New Clues to a Possible Connection with a Neal(e) Family

In the course of investigations into the history of the Arthurton family I have been fortunate in being able to correspond with several descendants of this family. One of them, Margaret Collier, who happens to be descended from Mary Newell, has found a new clue to a possible relationship between the Arthurton family and a Neal(e) family, not as relatives, but as neighbours.

It will be recalled from the above that the clock recently purchased from the Arthurton family was believed to have first been in the possession of one Peter Arthurton born at Weston in 1833. Although there appears to be no documentary evidence for this claim, this is the information which was supplied when the clock was purchased by Tony Blundell.

Knowing that Peter Arthurton was living at Sall in 1881, Miss Collier has searched the 1881 census in more detail. Peter Arthurton appears in the census return for Sall as Farm Bailiff at 'Worlds End Farm' (aged 48, born Weston), together with his wife Emily and four children. Close by, a Thomas Neale appears as Farm Bailiff at 'Park Farm' Sall (aged 47, born Guestwick), together with his wife Salome and their four children.²⁶ These two men, both farm bailiffs, of similar age, and living in the same parish, must surely have known each other. Could Thomas Neale be a descendant of the 'Mr Neal' who purchased Woodforde's clock in 1803? Thomas Neale's grandfather was another Thomas Neale, a farmer of Guestwick, who could be our 'Mr Neal(e)' (see Figure 4).

Thomas Neale the grandfather died in 1840 and in his will the family name is spelt Neale or Neal; he mentions his wife and their seven children but provides no other clues for us.²⁷ In the nineteenth century this was a large family with branches living in both Guestwick and nearby Foulsham. Did Peter Arthurton acquire the

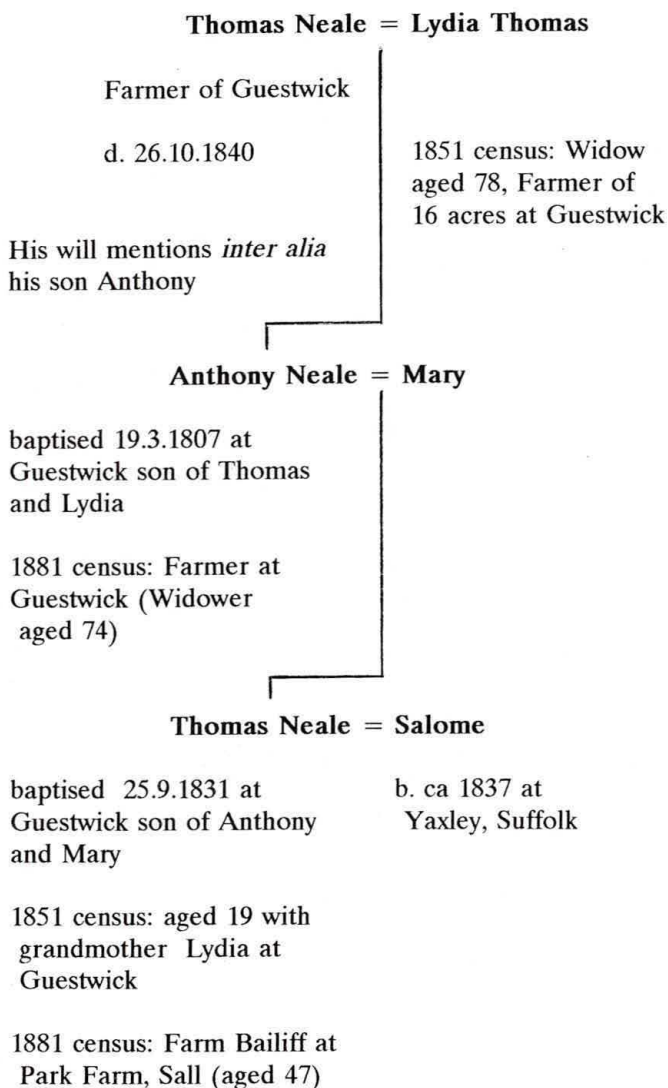


Figure 4: The Neale Family of Guestwick and Sall

clock from a descendant of this family who were undoubtedly his close neighbours when he was living at Sall? We may never know, and we are hindered once again by the fact that we do not have the first name of the 'Mr Neal' who attended the auction at Weston in 1803. However, this is an exciting new discovery and the search for further clues will continue; unfortunately the prospects of success must be slim.

Summary and Conclusions

Re-examination of all the available information suggests that there were only three clocks in the Woodforde household at the time of his death. One of these would have been the 'very neat Clock' which was delivered to the rectory by John Symonds in 1776. An oak longcase clock, a Symonds clock apparently of the correct period, has been found in the possession of an Arthurton family living not far from Weston. It is believed that the first known owner was one Peter Arthurton (Atterton) born at Weston in 1833 whose family later lived at Lyng and at Sall. This clock has been purchased by one of our members, Mr Tony Blundell.

Peter Arthurton's paternal grandmother was one Mary Newell who married Thomas Arthurton at Weston in 1790. Did the clerk at the 1803 sale of Woodforde's effects mistakenly write down the name 'Neal' as the purchaser of Woodforde's eight-day clock – when the bidder had given his name verbally as 'Newell'? Did the name sound something like 'Newl'? We know from the records of this sale that the clerk made several errors in his spelling of the purchasers' names. Was the clock purchased by the father or some other male relative of Mary Newell? Was this Robert Newel of Rougham? Is this how ownership of the clock passed into the Arthurton family?

The possibility remains that the clock may have passed into the Arthurton family, not from a related member of the family, but as a gift or purchase from a neighbour. At Sall in 1881, Peter Arthurton had a close neighbour by the name of Thomas Neale; both were farm bailiffs and they were of a similar age. Was Thomas Neale a descendant of our shadowy 'Mr Neal' who purchased this clock in 1803? His grandfather was one Thomas Neale, a farmer of Guestwick; he might just be the man who came to the auction at Weston, eight miles from Guestwick, in 1803.

Thus we have two different hypotheses: the clock may have passed to the Arthurton family having been purchased originally by a

Newell forebear, his name being incorrectly recorded at the sale as Neal(e), or it may have been acquired by Peter Arthurton from his neighbour Thomas Neale when they were both living at Sall. But these are no more than hypotheses – which may be impossible to test.

Perhaps these problems are beyond solution and the careful reader will note the many gaps in our knowledge which have complicated the preceding discussion. In the meantime, Mr Tony Blundell is trying to learn more about the characteristics of his clock which may help to fix its age with more precision. With regard to its provenance, what we really need to know is just *whose* clock James Woolmer serviced on 23 June 1815 because *this* was the clock now owned by Mr Blundell.

Finally, we have to consider that we may be studying the history of the *wrong* clock, and no attempt has been made to learn more about ‘Miss Neal of Attlebridge’ or to question whether Mr Brand may have had forebears with the surname Neal. Nevertheless, although this account has not been brought to a rounded conclusion, I have set out my fragmented story in the hopes that others, and particularly our horological enthusiasts, may be able to contribute to these ideas and to the on-going debates about the history of Woodforde’s ‘very neat clock’.

Notes and References

1. Journal XXX, No. 4, 33.
2. Journal XXX, No. 3, 23.
3. Transcript of the Sale Inventory of April 1803, Parson Woodforde Society Archives. The original is believed to be in the archives of New College Oxford.
4. Notice of the 1803 Sale published in a local newspaper. A transcript of this notice appeared in Newsletter No. 46 (Summer 2001).
5. We should note that Woodforde never uses the word ‘longcase’ and only describes this clock as ‘my large clock’ or ‘eight-day clock’. It has been *assumed* by commentators that this was a longcase clock because it was ‘large’ and is known to have stood in the hall.
6. It is my understanding that the expression ‘below stairs’ came into use in Victorian and Edwardian households in which the servants’ working quarters were frequently to be found in a basement and were therefore literally below stairs. I doubt if Woodforde was using the expression in his context.
7. In his article on Parson Woodforde and the Tax System (Supplement No. 7 (1984), page 23) Roy Winstanley has incorrectly transposed the sum of £1. 11. 0½. It should also be noted that the *total* taxes paid by Woodforde amounted to £15. 13. 4 (ms Diary) – not £15. 19. 4 as appears in Beresford.
8. Beresford Vol. V, footnote to page 114. He quotes from Dowell’s *History of Taxation*, vol. iii, pages 273-5. The rates set out by Beresford are confirmed in other sources.

9. An alternative, but less likely solution, is that the net tax of 30s. was for *two* years. The *annual* tax would then have been 15s. and could have been based on the possession of two clocks at 5s. (overlooking the humble wooden Kitchen clock for tax purposes) and two silver watches at 2s. 6d. This solution seems improbable as the tax was only introduced in 1797.
10. Pinchbeck was an alloy of about five parts of copper and one part of zinc which imparted a colour very much like that of gold. It was invented by a watchmaker Christopher Pinchbeck (d. 1732).
11. This tax is discussed in detail in a paper by Adrian Burchall: 'Pitt's Clock and Watch Tax: A Reassessment', *Antiquarian Horology*, September 1982, p. 454.
12. There are several occasions on which Symonds called to clear or alter 'my Clock' when no additional words were deemed necessary to indicate which clock was receiving attention (eg 23 October 1777, 19 October 1779, 2 May 1798, 28 March 1800).
13. The clock dial was made by 'OSBORNE'S MANUFACTORS BIRMINGHAM'; T. Hadley Osborne placed a notice in the *Birmingham Gazette* on 19 January 1778 advertising his services and it is assumed that the dial must therefore have been of this date or later. The hour divisions on the dial are in Arabic numerals, in contrast to the usual Roman numerals, and this departure is thought to date from 1800 to about 1827. It is concluded that John Symonds put this clock together in about 1800 or later. I am grateful to Mr Clifford Bird for this information.
14. All the information about this clock has been passed to me by its present owner unless indicated otherwise.
15. There are four further date marks: Nov 1817, 1836, 1838 (?), and 'Feb 1859 J. Ralfs'. John Symonds, clockmaker and watchmaker at his shop 'Sign of the Dial' in Market Square, Reepham, died in 1815. His son John died in 1810. Both are mentioned by Woodforde (12 January 1802). John Ralfs worked from premises in London Street, Norwich. I am grateful to Mr Clifford Bird for this further information.
16. Newsletter No. 38 (Summer 1999).
17. Indexes to Norfolk and Norwich Archdeaconry and Norwich Consistory Court wills (to 1857) do not refer to Newell wills for individuals living anywhere near the Weston area.
18. I have found only one reference to a further conjunction of the names Newell and Arthurton (Atterton, Arterton) and this is the marriage of a Stephen Newell to Hannah Atterton at North Tuddenham 1/11/1877.
19. Mary Newell could apparently not sign her name and made her mark. The witnesses at the marriage were John Smith and James Smith. The latter was probably the parish clerk at this time and he was witness to numerous marriages.
20. Parishes searched to date: Weston, Ringland, Honingham, Great Witchingham, Little Witchingham, Morton, Mattishall Burgh, Lyng, Whitwell, Attlebridge, Taverham, East Dereham, North Tuddenham, East Tuddenham. There is no entry for a Mary Newell at the right date in the International Genealogical Index (but its coverage of parishes in Norfolk is very sparse). The name Newell occurs in the registers of North Tuddenham over an extended period and four families (all farm labourers) appear there in the 1851 census. A John Newell married Elizabeth Boulter at Lyng in 1778 and they were both 'of this Parish' but this seems to have been an isolated event. There

- was no one of this name at Lyng in the 1851 census. A William Newell had a daughter Susan baptised at East Dereham 12 June 1799.
21. Examination of the 1851 census shows that 184 individuals with the name Newell were scattered widely across the county in 42 locations. Within an eight mile radius of Weston there were just five families: four at North Tuddenham and one at East Dereham.
 22. *Journal* XXVII, No. 4, p. 5.
 23. If Margaret was the wife of Thomas Arthurton's brother her married name would have been Arthurton. She can therefore only be Thomas Arthurton's 'sister-in-law' if she was the married sister of his wife.
 24. Margaret Dawson was buried at Weston 4 July 1854 aged 82. Her age at burial and her age given in the 1851 census (79) both suggest that she was born about 1771 or 1772.
 25. The International Genealogical Index of baptisms and marriages compiled by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. It is very unusual for such a limited period to be covered by this index and it appears to be based on a short extract from the Archdeacon's Transcripts.
 26. Peter Arthurton appears in RG11/1928 F28, page 11; Thomas Neale appears in RG11/1928 F29, page 13.
 27. An earlier will of John Neale of Guestwick made in 1814 is equally unhelpful.
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IN MEMORIAM

Margaret Barham Sharman, in recent years one of the *Journal's* most productive contributors, died on 3 April 2002, aged 77. Margaret's articles for the *Journal* consisted of the very best kind of family history, building upon the research of her grandmother, Catherine Bodham Johnson, and her aunt, a founder member of the Society, Mary Barham Johnson. Family letters, documents and portraits and a family tradition of research, provided Margaret with a direct link to her eighteenth century forebears – and Woodforde's friends – the Hewitts, Donnes, Bodhams and Johnsons. Her gift for narrative history may well have been nurtured during visits to her grandmother Johnson's house in The Close, Norwich where, although it was 'freezing' and 'spooky', she and her sister were treated to 'almost grown-up' stories and were taught to play rummy, bezique and backgammon!

Margaret was educated at Shrewsbury High School and Howell's School, Denbigh. At the age of 19 she joined the WRNS, spending much of the War in Colombo, Ceylon (as Sri Lanka then was) intercepting and decoding messages from Japanese submarines. It was there that Margaret Johnson met her future husband, John

Sharman, the couple marrying in 1946. After the birth of their first child, Martin, in 1949, the Sharmans moved to Africa where they spent most of the next two decades – in Northern Rhodesia, Uganda, Tanganyika and Kenya. Antony was born at Lusaka in 1955 and Jennifer in Nairobi in 1966. Sadly, two other children, Alison and Erica, died in infancy.

While in Lusaka Margaret had the opportunity to demonstrate her remarkable versatility: working for the Central African Broadcasting Station as programme scheduler, news reader, disk jockey and producer of an English language series! On moving to East Africa in 1956 she was actively involved in writing and publishing, producing a magazine for 8-12 year-olds and writing and editing a number of highly-praised children's books.

On returning to England in 1981 Margaret lived at Grundisburgh in Suffolk before moving to Runham, on the edge of the marshes between Acle and Yarmouth, in 1986. She continued to work as a freelance copy-editor for the Cambridge University Press, for her publisher Evans – for whom in the early 1990s she wrote a further six histories – and for the Society of Antiquities. The move to Norfolk meant that she was able to see much more of her aunt Mary, who introduced her to the Parson Woodforde Society and inspired her interest in family history. Members fortunate enough to have attended the 1989 Frolic will remember that Margaret brought her nonagenarian aunt, together with portraits of Mr and Mrs Bodham and Mrs Balls, and that after lunch Miss Barham Johnson entertained us long into the afternoon with tales of her family.

Despite advancing years and a number of serious medical conditions – requiring surgery in 1996 – Margaret never lost her remarkable creativity, enthusiasm for learning or sense of humour. She was, among much else, a keen gardener and member of the Institute of Advanced Motorists, a capable linguist and bookbinder. The breadth of her interests, including her life-long love of music and music-making, was a particular feature of the gathering held to celebrate Margaret's life in October: in Phyllis Stanley's words, 'the perfect way to pay tribute to the life of a friend'. Margaret, a woman of rich and rare accomplishments and life-enhancing energies, will be greatly missed.

M.L.B.

FROLIC REPORT 2002

In 2002 the Parson Woodforde Society is commemorating 200 years since the end of the diary; also, looking to January 2003, the bi-centenary of James Woodforde's death. Perhaps not so much of a 'Frolic' then?

Nevertheless, our September meeting this year was memorable; indeed, full of enjoyment.

On a lovely afternoon, Friday the 20th, members began to arrive at the Maid's Head Hotel in Norwich, our centrally situated venue for this year. Step across the road and one enters the Erpingham Gate of the Cathedral, which some members did, being given a tour round by former Cathedral guide Phyllis Stanley. A few stayed on for Choral Evensong, delighting in the fine singing, with the Dean reading the lessons.

Next, to a sherry reception in the hotel's Minstrel Room, which was ours for the weekend. Here were arranged displays of Woodfordiana; while Clifford Bird had brought one of his clocks (with a very sweet strike) and a family tree showing his descent from Matthew Haylett. This was Squire Custance's dishonest gardener, who sold his master's strawberries on the quiet. A portrait of the squire himself was one of a number of fine pictures brought along by Suzanne Custance. George Bunting and Mollie Matthews had their usual sales table for diaries and journals.

The room was soon resounding with voices as people greeted old friends and welcomed members attending for the first time. There were quite a few of these, making the party up to about 70 persons.

After dinner came the real business of the evening: the AGM. Chairman Nigel Custance gave us a talk summarising events in the Society since the last Frolic in London. The Committee had all been saddened by the death of Margaret Sharman, a long-standing and active member. Marian Peck, the late talented artist, was mentioned, with reference to the exhibition of her work at Smallburgh in the summer, and her pleasure in drawing places connected with Woodforde. Nigel thanked the Committee members for all their hard work, especially Ann and David Williams who had organised this Frolic. There had been discussion about a memorial at Weston Church in remembrance of the diarist. After consulting with Weston PPC it had been agreed that an engraved candlestick should be provided, plus a sum of money to be drawn on for flowers at Church Festivals or events as appropriate.



Clifford Bird (Haylett), Eric York (Woodforde) and Barbara York (Nancy)

Martin Brayne the Journal Editor and David Case the Treasurer both gave their reports, all being satisfactory, with thanks for the valued input of Jenny Alderson the Journal Co-ordinator, Peter Jameson the Diary Transcript Editor, and Bryan Sampson the Auditor.

On a beautiful autumn Saturday morning our two coaches set out on a tour of Woodfordean villages, including, of course, Weston Longville, and stopping for coffee at the Old Brewery House in Reepham, frequently visited by James. Here we heard an excellent talk on the history of the village by Kate Nightingale, Chairman of the Reepham Society.

The tour continued to Gressenhall Museum of Rural Life, formerly the House of Industry (more familiarly known as the Workhouse) which Woodforde inspected, leaving there in a state of depression. However, we were not depressed as we thoroughly enjoyed looking around; also we had a delicious country lunch of jacket potato and apple pie. A really excellent and knowledgeable guide, one of the Friends of Gressenhall Museum, came to take us round the buildings. In the course of this tour an unexpected and most satisfactory discovery was made: hanging in the boardroom was the portrait of Mr du Quesne, which has wandered around Norwich from the Castle Museum, to the Assembly House, to the St Peter Hungate Museum. Recently it was lost to view completely, so now

the mystery is solved.

Off again through the Norfolk countryside for yet more food at the original Lenwade Bridge Inn, where we were supplied with very nice sandwiches and cakes. JW did a lot of fishing here, though he frequently caught nothing but the odd eel. He refers often to the Inn and the Mill. The latter is restored from the burnt-down 18th century building, much renovated and very handsome, now turned into living quarters.

In the evening we had our annual dinner, complete with the toast to 'The Imperishable Memory', drunk from Jim Holmes' silver goblet. After dinner came one of the many highlights of this weekend, a performance of scenes from Woodforde's life given by several members in period costumes, some of which had been made by themselves. The Parson himself sat at a table looking back through his diary, with Nancy beside him. As he read out extracts, various characters stepped forward to talk about themselves and their relationship to Woodforde. We had Squire Custance; Matthew Haylett in countryman's smock and gaiters, complete with Norfolk accent; Ann Downing the washerwoman and Betty Dade the maid-servant. Who could forget the portrayal of Brother John in red hunting coat (with Somerset accent here), or Hannah Snell the female soldier? Or the stern master at Gressenhall admonishing two of his dependants, one a demented lady and one groaning with rheumatism? Finally, Nancy tearfully read from her diary of 1 January 1803: 'This morning about a quarter after Ten o'clock died my ever dear Uncle James Woodforde whose loss I shall lament all the days of my life,' her moving tribute upon Woodforde's death. As she ended, the whole company was silent for some moments, almost as though we were all feeling the loss of someone we knew and loved. This was followed by tremendous applause for the performers and congratulations to Martin who had orchestrated the event. It had been a delightfully successful Woodfordean evening.

Sunday was bright and sunny again for our journey in cars out to Weston, for a service of Matins. Some of the members assisted the local band in joyful bell-ringing. It was Harvest Festival, so the church was looking very fine with displays of produce and most beautiful flower arrangements, including of course one on the Parson's grave. During the service the traditional Harvest hymns were sung, including one mentioned by member Brian Pateman in his article on Woodforde's weather notes in this summer's Journal

– ‘The Spacious Firmament on High’, from a poem by Joseph Addison. We were honoured to have as our preacher the Rt. Rev’d. Graham Jones, Bishop of Norwich, in this special year. He spoke of the very first instance of a Harvest Thanksgiving Service instituted by Stephen Hawker of Morwenstow in Cornwall, that most eccentric of priests. He also noted that Christians give thanks for all foods, unlike other religions with their dietary laws. And what would Woodforde have thought of changes in Weston church if he were here now? The Rector not wearing a wig! Ladies not wearing hats! And why all these vegetables heaped around? Nevertheless, in the diary, Woodforde frequently expressed his gratitude for a good harvest, so would no doubt have approved of a thanksgiving service in church.

There was time for a stroll round the village before lunch, served as per tradition in the Village Hall. We had the usual much-enjoyed Norfolk Black Turkey with ham, jacket potatoes and salad, or quiche, followed by a gorgeous array of puddings, everything provided and served by Diana Howlett and her splendid team from the village. At the conclusion of the meal Diana received a well-merited presentation of a framed map of Parson Woodforde’s Norfolk drawn by Marian Peck, in recognition of her years of service to the Society.

Time now to break up and depart, as always with a little sadness at saying goodbye to old friends again, but with memories to take away of a very happy Frolic Weekend.

LETTERS

Dear Sir,

I recently purchased a copy of The World’s Classics edition of *The Diary of a Country Parson* and was prompted to do so partly because of the cutting from a newspaper’s letters page which I found pasted onto the front leaf:

Parson Woodforde

Sir – Many of your readers will be delighted to know that the portrait of Parson Woodforde, painted by his nephew, which was recently auctioned in London, was bought, restored and has been most generously presented by Mr C. Clutson of Weston House, to the parish church at Weston Longville, where it will be at all times available for inspection.

Should the church be found locked, the key is in the charge of the landlord of the Eagle Inn, immediately opposite the entrance

to the churchyard. It will be of interest to visitors, also, that this inn is substantially unchanged since Woodforde's day, though unfortunately, possibly on account of a Custance hatchment on the east gable, the inn is now called the Eagle, whereas it was always known and is still called locally the Hart. To the east of the church the Five Ringers Inn, having obvious reference to the church's ring of five bells and having been until very recently the rendezvous for handbell practice, retains its name.

Yours, etc.,

J. E. Wynne Roach
The Rectory, Weston Longville

The Reverend Wynne Roach died in 1971 and we believe that the Eagle Inn finally closed its doors in 1964, so that this helps to date this letter. Unfortunately the name of Mr Clutsom was misspelt. It was pleasing to read here confirmation that the eagle displayed on the inn sign was in fact the Custance eagle as I have surmised in one of my articles (Journal XXXIV, 3, 4). Curiously, Wynne Roach describes it as a hatchment – usually denoting a display of heraldic insignia on the occasion of a person's death – but he may not have intended this exact meaning. It was also interesting to read that the inn 'is now called the Eagle, whereas it was always known and is still called locally the Hart'. The local preference for the original name 'Hart' is remarkable, when it is known that the name was changed to 'The Eagle' at some time between 1803 and 1825.

David Case, *Deal*

Dear Sir

I am given to understand by my friend Richard Wright (a new member and the Secretary of Weston Park Golf Club) that there is an error in Phyllis Stanley's admirable essay on the 150 years of Weston House in our Autumn Journal.

When the coach house was 'transformed into a charming house', the lady who was responsible was then Mrs Nancy Clutsom. She paid a visit to the Club a while ago and took with her a photo album with interesting pictures in it.

Eric York, *Old Hunstanton*

Editor's note – Mr York is quite correct. It was Charles and Nancy Clutsom who restored the coach-house. After her husband's sadly premature death, Nancy, in 1976, was re-married – to Richard Downton.

CHAIRMAN'S ENDPIECE

Wind of Change

The easterly winds at the start of December gave me inspiration for the theme of this contribution. Here in our new abode in the North York Moors National Park, the weather has only 20 miles to travel inland from the North Sea, very similar to Weston Longville. As the wind sweeps across the moors, I think of Woodforde and his journeys – at least he had hedgerows to protect him from the extremes.

Winds of change certainly gusted through the minds of past and present committee members when considering our recent Frolic. Swirling around were the thoughts of how to enhance the weekend. Ann Williams built on the idea of a 'costume' event – reported in detail elsewhere in this Journal. What an achievement; what a change! So many members, old and new, actively involved in bringing Woodforde to us. So much energy and enthusiasm – surely they must have had been rehearsing for several days, but no, they had worked with their 'stage director', Martin Brayne, for just tens of minutes.

Through the ether came another change that was formally announced at the Frolic – our own web site. Again the detail is to be found in the Newsletter and, yes, I have mentioned it in earlier articles. I would only add that it does demonstrate how we are reaching a wider audience and reflects the charitable status enjoyed by the Society.

.....and the wind gusted some time ago into the thinking of Martin, our vice-chairman and editor. I am not too sure when he first decided to research the Great Storm: Britain's Night of Destruction November 1703. However, he somehow found time; it was published by Sutton on the 31st October this year.

On that note I shall wind up!

Seasons Greetings and happy reading.

NIGEL CUSTANCE

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.

PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY COMMITTEE 2002/2003

George Bunting	<i>President</i>
Dr Nigel Custance	<i>Chairman</i>
Martin Brayne	<i>Vice-Chairman & Editor</i>
Dr David Case	<i>Treasurer</i>
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The Parson Woodforde Society is a registered charity no. 1010807

