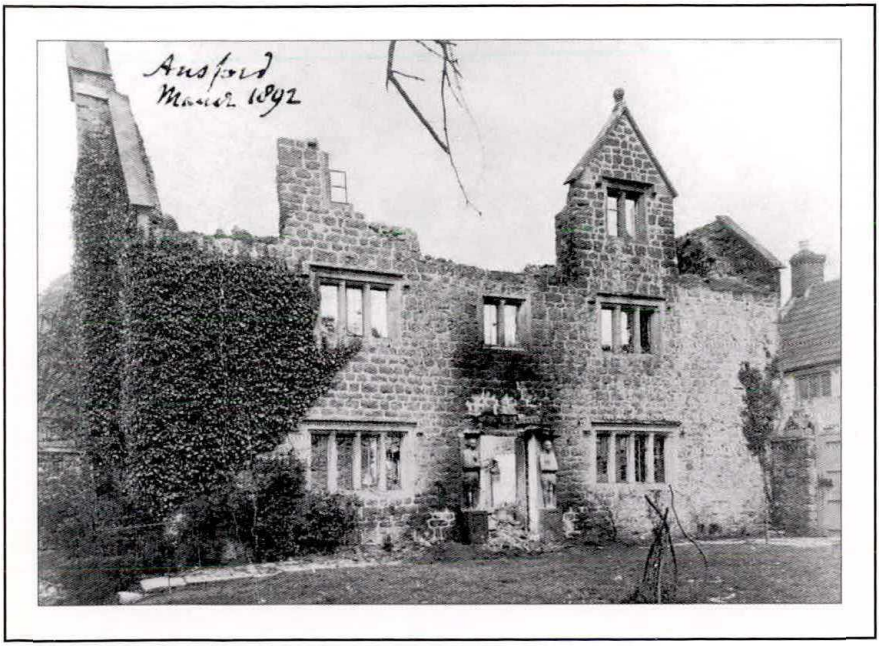
PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

Quarterly Journal



THE LOWER HOUSE, ANSFORD – AFTER THE FIRE

(with thanks to Mr Roger Bayliss)

VOL. XXXX NO. 1 SPRING 2007

Both my Brothers were quite merry or rather quite drunk
Sat up till near 4 in the morning and they disturbed
Me all Night & all the House till that Time, though
We were all gone to bed but they – Most intolerable
Noise all Night, it was impossible almost to sleep –
I could not sleep till it was light, viz. till 4 o'clock
I did not think Jack ever had his equal – worse & worse
Such a Sunday night again may I never feel or see –
Our House at Lower House is the worst House in the Pa=
=rish, or any other Parish – It grieves me to see it –

(R. L. Winstanley [ed], *The Ansford Diary of James Woodforde*, Vol. 4, 14 April 1771)

ISSN 1365-327X

Issued to Members of the Parson Woodforde Society

Chairman & Editor
Martin Brayne
Long Croft
Whitehough Head
Chinley, High Peak
SK23 6BX

Membership Secretary
Mrs Ann Elliott
22 Gaynor Close
Wymondham
Norfolk
NR18 0EA

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

James Woodforde was born on 16 June but that was by no means a red-letter day as far as he was concerned. He was, of course, born on 16 June Old Style and by the time the Diary was being written the notorious eleven days had been 'lost' and the New Style, Gregorian Calendar was in operation so that our late Editor, Roy Winstanley, writing in the Journal for Summer 1970 (III, 2) refers to it being issued 'to coincide with the visit of the Society to his birthplace at Ansford on his birthday, 27 June'. Insofar as Woodforde paid much attention to his birthday the 27th was the day commemorated. On that day in 1770 he wrote:

> This very Day I am thirty Years of Age – God make me truly thank= =ful for thy great goodness as on this Day shewed me by bringing me into the World and for preserving me to this Day from the many & great Dangers which frail mortality is every day ex- =posed to …

Likewise, on 27 June 1800 he wrote:

> I am finely to day thank God for it! And this Day
> I entered my sixtieth Year being born (old Stile)
> the sixteenth of June in the Year, 1760 –

Women, I am frequently reminded, are far better at remembering birthdays than are men; so did Nancy, I wondered, in the year 1792 – for which her complete Diary survives, make reference to her uncle's birthday? Alas, there is no entry for the 16th June while that for the 27th is mainly concerned with paying her staymaker, chatting to Mr and Mrs Custance and the acquisition of a new bonnet ('I think it very smart'). You can read more of Nancy's 1792 Diary in a finely sympathetic piece by Katharine Solomon in the current Journal.

Whether or not we regard the 16th or 27th as our diarist's birthday it is the former date which we have chosen – it happens to be a Saturday – to mark the publication of the seventeenth and final volume of the Society's definitive edition of the Diary. Of that event you can read more in the Newsletter but I do wish to take this opportunity to congratulate Peter Jameson on the quite remarkable task he has completed – not merely for this Society but also for the wider world of scholarship and eighteenth century history. We owe

him a massive debt of gratitude for continuing the work so ably begun by Roy Winstanley. The final volume, covering the period from 1 January 1801 to the last, sad entry on 17 October 1802, also includes an index to the entire series.

Evidence that we cannot rest on our laurels, however, came earlier in the year in the form of a Timewatch programme on BBC 2; it concerned the impact on the British Isles of the devastating Icelandic eruption in the summer of 1783. No reference was made in the programme to Woodforde but two of our members, Brian Houghton and Caroline Mosey, hastened to their diaries and, as they suspected, discovered that Woodforde is a most remarkably pertinent source. You can read their reactions to the programme in the following pages.

After viewing the Timewatch programme – entitled 'The Killer Cloud' – I took the liberty of writing to one of the contributors, Dr John Grattan of the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, who was most grateful to receive copies of the relevant diary extracts. In return he kindly sent me off-prints of a number of articles he and his research students had written on the subject. One of these articles contained the following quotation from the London Gazette, 3 July 1783:

> – at Mattishall in Norfolk; a young man was returning from the pasture, he saw a large ball of fire descending from the skies without the least appearance of a tempest, which directed itself so near him that it singed his stockings without hurting him.

This event, typical of that remarkable summer, took place on 30 June. This led me to my copy of Volume 10 of the Diary only to discover that, although Nancy and James went to Mattishall on the following day – 'to M^{r} Bodhams … it being his Rotation Day' – he makes no mention of the fireball or the singed stockings. A reminder that our diarist is, like Miss Araminta Vavasour's lover, 'only an excellent person'!

MARTIN BRAYNE

NANCY VISITS MRS CUSTANCE

During 1792 Nancy Woodforde kept a Diary,[1] which not only makes delightful reading but also reveals some aspects of life at Weston Parsonage in a different light. I have selected one particular day in early March, on which Nancy made a long diary entry about her visit to see Mrs Custance, who was still confined to bed after giving birth to her latest child on Christmas Day.

Nancy's first visit to Mrs Custance after the birth was on 15 February, when she had reported that Mrs Custance had suffered a "strain across her Loins" during childbirth and was unable to move in bed without pain. On Friday 2 March she made her second visit:

> Walked up to Weston H---e to see Mrs. Custance. Was caught in the Rain going up and was very warm and much Fatigued owing to the Rain when I got there. Heard that Mrs. Branthwaite was with Mrs. Custance, therefore I went into the Housekeepers Room to rest myself and had a great deal of Conversation with Mrs Tooke who I found a very clever sensible Woman. Mrs. Layton came a few minutes after I was there. I would not let Mrs. Custance know that I was there till after the above Ladies were gone, as I did not like to make my appearance while they were there. As soon as they were gone Mrs. Custance was informed that I was there and she sent word to me that I must stay and dine there and she would send me home in the Evening. I accepted her invitation but did not see her till an Hour after the Ladies were gone she had been fatigued with the above Ladies Company.
>
> I was desired to walk up into her Room about half an hour before Dinner and found Mrs. Custance better and very glad to see me. I was very happy to hear that Mrs. Custance had turned in her Bed on Wednesday for the first time since her illness and that she had turn'd two or three times since, but with great pain. She offered me a beautiful Rose which Mrs. Branthwaite brought her out of their hothouse but I would not take it on any account. Mr. Custance was in the Room when I went to see Mrs. Custance and was glad to see me. Betty walked with me and she carried my New Gown and Apron which I shewed to Mrs. Custance, both of which she admired very much indeed as did Mr. Custance likewise. I also carried up my Carlton House Magazine for Mrs. Custance as I thought it may entertain her for a short time, as any little thing is amusing to a Person in confinement.
>
> I din'd with Mr. Custance and we had a deal of Conversation

about Books and other things so that I spent my time very agreeably. I went up to Mrs. C. Room after Dinner and sat and chatted with her near an Hour. Heard that the Duke of York had lately lost seventeen thousand Pounds at gaming and that the Duchess was not so happy as could be wished. It was a very wet evening there, Mrs. Custance sent me home in her Coach, Betty came with me in it also – I got home to tea. Brought home the second Vol: of Baron Trenck and Mrs. Custance lent me the first Vol: of Hogarth illustrated by John Ireland. Sent a Letter to Br. Sam. Play'd at Cards with my Uncle in the Evening.

What a fascinating picture of eighteenth-century life, revealing so much about social relationships between the Custances, the Woodfordes and their servants, Mrs Tooke and Betty Dade.

Nancy refers again to Mrs Tooke six months later, on 24 September. The Custances "were very much vexed lately at hearing of the bad management of Mrs. Tooke their Housekeeper and Rising their Butlar, who have kept so much company that the other Servants were kept short of everything …". We may recall the occasion thirty years earlier when James Woodforde, one of a party of six, was entertained to breakfast and dinner at Redlynch by Lord Ilchester's Steward and Housekeeper.[2] On 2 March 1792, when Betty Dade accompanied Nancy on her visit to Weston House, it is probable that Betty had dinner there with Mrs Tooke or with the other servants, but that sort of hospitality was no more than would have been expected for a maid accompanying her mistress on a visit, and should not have been a black mark against Mrs Tooke.

Mrs Custance had given birth 11 times in 12 years.[3] She did not recover from the latest birth for many months, and when she first came downstairs on 30 May the Church bells were rung. A pregnancy a year suggests that she employed a wet-nurse, as would have been normal in a wealthy family. It meant that she did not benefit, as poorer women did, from the contraceptive effect of breast-feeding, which would probably have reduced the number of pregnancies.[4]

Nancy's wish not to intrude on Mrs Custance's visitors, Mrs Branthwaite and Mrs Layton, seems to show a natural delicacy and consideration, but it was probably partly due to a consciousness of class-differences and a desire not to risk a snub from the upper-class

Weston House – where Nancy Woodforde arrived on Friday, 2 March 1792 – 'very warm and much Fatigued'.

visitors. Her Uncle James had shown a similar caution some years before. His friend Dr Penny had invited him to dinner at Badminton, the Duke of Beaufort's seat, but Woodforde did not accept as the Duke's family were in residence.[5]

After the other visitors had left, Nancy still had to wait a further hour. We must not blame Mrs Custance for this: if you are unable to move without pain, then having visitors is exhausting, and once they have left there may be necessary nursing tasks to be carried out. But at length Nancy was allowed up to Mrs Custance's bedside. Nancy's refusal of the hothouse rose is touching; it is emblematic of her firm friendship with Mrs Custance, that the rose was offered but Nancy felt free not to accept it. The two women were almost the same age, Frances Custance having been born in 1756,[6] the year before Nancy.

Nancy puts a brave face on her dinner *à deux* with Mr Custance, recording that she found it very agreeable, but on a similar occasion two months later she was more honest: Mrs Custance was still confined to bed, but when Nancy was pressed to stay to dinner, she "did not chose it on account of dyning alone with Mr Custance which is not so pleasant for a single Woman".[7]

The gossip about the Duke and Duchess of York is amusing. Frederick Duke of York, the second son of George III, who today surveys the Mall from his column, had lately married Princess Frederica of Prussia. She had arrived in England the previous November, and had immediately attracted public attention. She was particularly admired for her elegant little feet, and in August Nancy acquired some new shoes with "York heels".[8] Despite Nancy's report that the Duchess of York was "not so happy as could be wished", the couple remained on amicable terms, although the Duchess retired to their country house near Weybridge.[9]

During the spring and summer, Nancy continued to visit Mrs Custance, but on 1 September the Woodfordes were hit by the upsetting news that the Custances were to move to Bath. Even James, not normally given to recording his emotions in his diary, said that it made them "very uneasy". Nancy uses her diary more dramatically, recording her sadness in entries over several days, and thinks also of Lady Bacon who will be losing the company of a dear sister.

One of the (to me) surprising aspects of Nancy's diary is the amount of reading which went on in Weston Parsonage. The book lent to Nancy on 2 March, the autobiography of Baron Trenck, was part of a 3-volume set, and Nancy got through all three volumes in six days.[10] Nancy did not just read to herself: on many evenings she read a sermon to her Uncle, or sometimes a passage from a book of natural history. Less often, he read to her. On 10 March, she commented "Not a soul has call'd on us this Week. No Letters from our friends. We spend our time in reading." James Woodforde's diary is largely silent on the subject of reading, and one wonders if he had other pastimes or hobbies which he never mentioned.

Nancy also occupied herself making bonnets, handkerchiefs for herself and others, and shirts for her uncle, although the "Gown and Apron" which she took to show Mrs Custance on 2 March had been recently bought not made; the gown was actually "on approval", perhaps the reason why Nancy wanted Mrs Custance's opinion. In June 1792 Nancy made a new-style "tucker", the word now only familiar in the phrase "best bid and tucker". It was a ruffled insert which tucked into the front of a lady's gown, whether for modesty, or to protect your chest from draughts, or to prevent food falling down your cleavage. Nancy had a great interest in fashion, and often records in detail exactly what the ladies she meet were wearing. Roy Winstanley, who took a somewhat negative view of Nancy's "plight", possibly did not appreciate the creative satisfaction of making clothes, especially if, like Nancy, you have the luxury of being able to choose what to make.[11]

Some aspects of Nancy's life are familiar from her uncle's diary, such as the great dislike of rain. On 2 March, Nancy and Betty were caught in the rain, and perhaps hurried the rest of the way to Weston House, as Nancy says she arrived "very warm and much fatigued". One feels more sorry for Betty, who was carrying Nancy's gown and apron in what must have been a bulky parcel which she had to protect from the rain and the mud. Another common theme in the diaries of both Nancy ahd James is their equivocal relationship with Mr and Mrs Jeans. Nancy more than once acknowledges that Mrs Jeans is a good mother to her children, but during the course of the year she also refers to the Jeans' pride and affectation, she calls their behaviour ungenteel, and she describes Mrs Jeans as "a mear nothing at all".[12]

Did Nancy keep equally detailed diaries in other years? Dorothy Heighes Woodforde, who edited Nancy's diary in 1932, found a detailed diary only for this one year, 1792, written in a notebook.[13] It strikes me that although Nancy commences on 1 January with some pious remarks, and concludes on 31 December with an impious remark about her mother, this is just a way of acknowledging the start and end of a calendar year. There is nothing like "Have decided to keep a diary" or "Shall cease writing this diary", which suggests to me that there were diaries for 1791 and 1793, or at least enough of them to be continuous with 1792. Were there other notebooks, long since lost? If only there was a chance of finding them!

References

1. Woodforde, Dorothy Heighes (ed), *Woodforde Papers and Diaries*: Morrow & Co. 1932 and 1990.
   References "AMW ..." below are to Nancy's 1792 Diary in this book.
2. JW, 17/8/1764
3. Winstanley, R. L., *Parson Woodforde – The Life & Times of a Country Diarist*, Morrow & Co, Bungay, 1996, p. 222.
4. Jeffrey J. Rous, *Is Breast-feeding a substitute for Contraception*? in *Demography*, Vol. 39 No. 4, Nov. 2001, p 497-512.
5. JW, 7/10/1774
6. Winstanley, R. L. (ed) in PWS Volume 8, 1778-9 (1998), Note 2 for June 1778.
7. AMW, 8/5/1792.
8. AMW, 11/8/1792.
9. Burne, Alfred H., *The Noble Duke of York*: Staples Press, 1949, p. 235 and Note. According to this book, the *DNB* is incorrect in saying that the couple separated. The Duke, although he pursued his military career from a London base, regularly visited his wife in Surrey.
10. Baron Frederick Trenck (1726-94), not to be confused with his older cousin Baron Franz Trenck. He served in the bodyguard of Frederick the Great, had an affair with the King's sister, was imprisoned in the fortress of Magdeburg for over nine years, retired to France and died on the guillotine. (www.exulanten.com on 31/12/2006)
11. Winstanley, R. L., *Nancy Woodforde and the plight of the Eighteenth Century Woman*: PWS Journal XX No. 3, Autumn 1987, pp 5-24.
12. AMW, 5/11/1792.
13. Woodforde, D. H., *op cit*, p. 36.

A SHORT-LIVED FRIENDSHIP

Roger Hall steps into the pages of the diary on 7 January 1779 with no more comment from James Woodforde than "Mr. Hall lately presented to the Rectory of Garveston called on me this morning & stayed & dined with me". Having finally sent off his troublesome nephew Bill on the London coach the previous month, Woodforde, so used to being surrounded by other people both at home in Ansford and at Oxford, noted on 27 December "I was rather dull being quite alone". He did have plenty of company, Mr du Quesne, the Donnes, the Bodhams and their niece Mrs Davie were regular visitors, but perhaps at first Woodforde saw in Roger Hall someone rather like himself. Both had been educated at Winchester, although as he was some eight years younger Hall had entered the school the year after Woodforde had left. Both were bachelors and strangers to Norfolk, but unlike Woodforde Hall didn't have a permanent base and during his time as Rector of Garveston had a variety of lodgings. First he stayed with a farmer at Winborough and then with a barber in Dereham, while also for some time having a second set of lodgings in Norwich. The welcoming door of the Parsonage at Weston was opened wide for him and he soon took full advantage of the hospitality offered, finding it an agreeable place to spend much of his time. He also joined in the circle of clergy who took part in the Rotation dinners, although as he lived in lodgings, he very infrequently offered any return of hospitality himself.

By March Hall was staying overnight at Weston and two days were spent fishing in local pits and in the river at Lenwade much as Woodforde had previously done with his nephew. At the beginning of May, accompanied by Woodforde's servant Will Coleman, they both set off on horseback on a five day tour of the North Norfolk coast, a holiday that would seem very familiar to any modern day tourist. Passing through Aylsham their first night was spent at Cromer where they supped on "Hot Crabbs and Lobsters ... that were just brought from the sea and Exceedingly fine eating they were". From Cromer they travelled west through the rain in Cley to Wells where they hired a boat and for the first time in his life Woodforde ventured onto the sea and was seasick, although, as he remarked "M^{r} Hall having been often at Sea did not mind it". Back on dry land the tour took in the ruins of Walsingham Abbey and

Houghton Hall, the seat of the Walpole family – "The House & Furniture the greatest I ever saw" – and finally wound up with a night spent at the Crown Inn in Swaffham. Later in the month Woodforde records a card-playing party at Hall's lodgings in Winborough where "we were all exceeding merry & cheerful", even though only drinks and no meal had been offered to the guests.

On 31 May Woodforde started on his horseback journey back home to Somerset and stopped at Andover to pay his respects to Hall's parents both on his outward and return journeys. The Halls were a long-established family in Andover and Roger Hall had been baptized there on 28 March 1748, the only child of Roger Hall and his Wife Mary Leddall. Roger Hall sr. had been a clothier but his business interests had grown as had his standing in the community and by 1789 he was Bailiff of the Corporation of Andover, just the kind of successful businessman of the eighteenth century who would have had his son educated as a gentleman at Winchester and Brasenose College, Oxford in preparation for a career in the Church.

Returning from Somerset in the September Woodforde's first visitor at Weston was Hall, in some agitation over a curious and rather comical sounding incident that had taken place at Watton some weeks before where –

> he was insulted in public Company by one Nelthorpe
> and endeavouring to come at him and lick him
> had greatly hurt his Leg between a Door & a Lintel
> M^{r} Hall could not get at him or else would have licked him
> handsomely, I wish he had done so –

The Nelthorpe family were local landowners. What the argument was about will never now be known although it doesn't sound particularly gentlemanly behaviour on Hall's part, and the somewhat belligerent comment by the diarist seems rather out of character with the milder Woodforde that we are more familiar with.

In October Woodforde's sister Sophy Clarke, her son Sam and niece Nancy arrived at the Parsonage. Roger Hall was still a regular visitor but with a full house he was obliged to go and sleep at the inn at Lenewade Bridge. It was probably about this time that

Woodforde began to feel his hospitality was being taken advantage of, as in the following May with Sophy and Sam having returned to Somerset, when Roger Hall appeared at the house hoping for a bed Woodforde refused him on the grounds that it was not possible now that Nancy was living with him. However, considering how ready he was to find room for other, more wanted guests, this just looks like an obvious excuse. Anyway, Roger Hall wasn't one to take "no" for an answer and it didn't deter him from continuing to make regular visits to Weston Parsonage for the next couple of years to enjoy the company there and eat a good many meals, but from then on he had to find himself a bed either at the Inn or at Mr du Quesne's house.

On 20 March 1781 Woodforde went to Dereham and dined at Hall's lodgings (although he had to sleep the night at the King's Arms) and together they visited the House of Industry at Gressenhall. Building work on it had started in 1777 and was still being carried out some four years later. This was to be the future of care for the ever-increasing numbers of the poor, with the huge institutionalized workhouses replacing each parish's individual responsibility for them. As Woodforde noted of the building, there were about "380 poor in it now, but they don't look either healthy or cheerful, a great Number die there – 27 have died since Christmas last." The next day Hall asked Woodforde to return some £85 of his that Woodforde had had in his safekeeping and also asked him to lend some more, which Woodforde refused to do. Hall then set off on one of his regular visits back to Hampshire. This day seems to mark the end of any real friendship that may ever have existed between them as from then on most of the remarks in the diary about Roger Hall are derogatory.

On 7 October 1781 Woodforde wrote:

> About 5 o'clock this Afternoon who should come to my House but Hall, who is just come into Norfolk from Hampshire – he supped & spent the Evening with us, & wanted sadly to sleep at my House, but it could not be – he slept at Lenewade Bridge, left us about 9. o'clock – Hall fights very cunning about self, he loves himself too well, and would fain get a firmer footing at my House I never asked him to come to my House when he went –

He is very bold and will not take broad Hints –
He will do anything to save his own Pocket –

Adding a few days later:

He is not looked upon in this neighbourhood so much
as he used to be, as his Visits are merely interested
for himself, and that he never makes any kind of return
for the same, not even the smallest Present to any Person –

A month later Hall called on Woodforde to take his leave, as he was returning to his family in Hampshire "for some considerable time, finding it very disagreeable to board in this part of the Country – and which it must be to him". In truth, it is quite likely that few of his parishioners in Garveston would have even been able to recognize their rector, as he seems to have been absent for most of his incumbency. If Weston was remote, Garveston, a small scattered parish on the Dereham to Wymondham road some ten miles south west of Weston, was even more so. A quiet parish averaging only about three marriages a year, Roger Hall had begun by conducting the five marriages that took place during his first two years as rector, 1779 and 1780, but after that his name never again appears in the marriage register. Garveston was served by a succession of curates, including Matthew Lane of Hingham who also served as curate at Weston church during the summer of 1786 while Woodforde was on one of his holidays to Somerset. Another regular was the Revd Grigson Heyhoe of Welbourne who died in 1799. And finally there was the Revd George William Smith (curate to John Smith at Mattishall but apparently no relation) who was still curate at Garveston in 1839 under the next rector of the parish, the Revd Augustus Philip Clayton.

Hall then spent most of 1782 in Hampshire and returned from Andover in the October. Still not having taken the hint that he was unwelcome he visited Weston hoping for a bed at the Parsonage. Woodforde tried to call his bluff by offering him his own bed, but Hall refused it, while at the same time also refusing to leave, making the diarist comment that he "therefore obliged me to sit up with him all night". They must have been very long, awkward hours, but they paid off for Woodforde as Roger Hall is then absent from the diary for the next couple of years.

On 15 October 1784 Woodforde had two callers at the Parsonage. Roger Hall on horseback, was accompanied by a "Mr. Fellows of Haviland a Gentleman of Great Fortune and Member for Andover" but neither had time to dismount and enter the house. Roger Hall was negotiating for a second parish and an increase in his income, and, as was necessary for advancement in the Church, he knew the right people. William Fellowes was one of the two MPs returned for Andover, the other being Lord Howard in whose gift was the living of the Norfolk Parish of Ellingham. Roger Hall sr. also played his part in securing the second living, as that year he was one of the two Justices of the Corporation of Andover. Negotiations being successfully concluded Woodforde noted in his diary on 26 August 1785 "Hall is come into Norfolk to take Possession of another living the rectory of Ellingham." Ellingham, another small parish just on the Norfolk side of the river Waveney near Bungay was clearly more to his liking and, to give him his due, having become a pluralist he was to be a far better shepherd to his second flock than he had ever been to his first, as he was to spend the rest of his days at Ellingham.

On 1 June 1787 Woodforde was in Norwich and notes "Whom should I meet in my Walk this Morning but the bold Roger Hall". He was then obliged to dine with him at the King's Head and didn't manage to free himself from his company until the evening. Clearly this meeting simply encouraged Hall to visit Weston again, as in August, returning to the Parsonage after conducting a burial, Woodforde was dismayed to find Roger Hall there. Luckily as he was due to dine with Mr Townshend at Honingham Hall that day, it was left to the luckless Nancy and Betsy Davie to do the entertaining. "Nancy & Betsy were heartily tired of Hall's Company", Woodforde noted, adding gratefully that "he was gone to sleep at Lenewade Bridge before I returned."

On 30 July 1788 Woodforde set out from Norwich to spend a night in Bungay. One reason for his visit was to see his old friend the Revd Castres Donne at Broom, but curiosity to see Roger Hall at Ellingham must have played a great part, as he went several miles out of his way to find him, and was not to be disappointed. He found Roger Hall at a Mrs Johnson's (where he took his meals) and went with him to his Parsonage.

> Such a Parsonage House & Garden and in so low a place, close also to the River which often overflows, beside Ellingham Mill and so close that the sound of it is continually heard. – Such a House and Situation I think very far from being agreeable M^r^ Hall however is fitting of it in a shabby Manner and at present sleeps there of nights, no Man, Maid, Horse, Dog, or any living Creature but himself there – The House very small indeed

This is the last time Roger Hall is mentioned in the diary, but there may well have been a good excuse for his style of living, which James Woodforde seems to have taken some satisfaction in finding so disagreeable, as his father had died that April and he would have been occupied in sorting out his affairs back in Andover for his mother, who was to live on until 1790.

This was to be a time of change for Roger Hall as on 28 March 1789, at the age of 41, he married. His bride was Jenny Smith, some two years older than himself and the wedding took place at the church of St Luke, Chelsea, her home parish at the time. A family with the name of Smith were tenants at Ellingham Hall, but as it is such a common name it has proved impossible to place her with them or any other of the Smiths who had contact with Roger Hall. The witnesses, Nehemiah Reed and his wife Ann had Hampshire connections, but nothing more can be gleaned from them. The couple settled back at Ellingham and Roger Hall became a dutiful and ever present rector. Jenny Hall died in the June of 1823 and Roger Hall outlived her by a year, being buried at Ellingham on 15 September 1824.

His will had been written some thirty years before and the only two people named in it, his wife and a cousin Samuel Collis, who had been an innkeeper in Essex, had both predeceased him, so the next relative with a claim to the estate had to be found back in Hampshire.

Roger Hall sr. had two sisters; Mary had married Richard Child, a grocer from Andover, in 1734. His death four years later was to leave her a widow with one son, also Richard, who later became a surgeon in the town. A second short-lived marriage to John Collis was to leave her with another son, Samuel. Samuel had no children

and by the time Roger Hall died the only survivor from the Child line was a John Thomas Child who through some mental incapacity was unable to conduct his own financial affairs. Roger Hall sr's other sister Elizabeth had married William Lane, a tallow chandler living in London, and had three surviving children, Mary born in 1751, Letitia born in 1755 (who married Thomas Vigor in 1782) and Edward born in 1759. Mary Lane, as the eldest of Roger Hall's cousins, was granted probate of his estate at the end of 1824.

On the face of it, the Hampshire relatives appear to have been a somewhat unfortunate set of people. Edward Lane had disowned his wife over some real or believed neglect on her part at the time of the death of their only child, a daughter, and had left the bulk of his considerable estate to his unmarried sister Mary. She died in 1835 and so the main beneficiary of the whole family was her nephew, William Vigor (1785-1863), her sister Letitia's only surviving child.

Having had his cousin John Thomas Child declared a lunatic in 1826 William Vigor took control of the money from the Child side of the family as well. All of which left him very comfortably off and able to live out his life on his inherited income alone. He married Fanny Sophie Leacock in Greenwich in 1818 and the couple then settled in Stoke Damerel on the south Devon coast with their two children, William Edward Vigor (1819-1897) and Louisa Emily Vigor who was born in 1823. William Edward Vigor was to become rector of the small Cornish village of Botus Fleming and served his parishioners there for nearly forty years while Louisa Emily married into an old Cornish family, the Carwithens, who had produced many clergymen over time. Her husband, the Revd George Edmund Carwithen (1823-1889), had been at sea for several years as a chaplain with the Royal Navy, but after the marriage he took to dry land and became chaplain of the Royal Naval Hospital at Devonport, and in 1883 became Honorary Chaplain to the Duke of Edinburgh.

It is difficult to decide exactly what went wrong in the friendship between James Woodforde and Roger Hall. At no point does Woodforde either describe his appearance or character – except after he had decided that he no longer wanted him to visit the Parsonage. Perhaps it amounted to no more than the Revd Hall's

apparent meanness, as the only gifts he ever brought to Weston Parsonage were a pheasant and a woodcock (at different times). For James Woodforde, always one to observe the social proprieties, this unwillingness to make any kind of return for all the hospitality offered to him simply proved too much for him to continue their acquaintanceship.

"I AM GLAD I AM ONCE RIGHT": JAMES WOODFORDE AND TWO OXFORD ELECTIONS

The morning of 24 November 1767 was a busy one for James Woodforde. He married Grace Cary to Joshua Jackson at Castle Cary, took delivery of five gallons of rum – 'being part of a Puncheon' – at Dr Clarke's, and at the Lower House was waited on by 'Colonel Cox's Brother & Mr William Melliar', who desired his vote for Sir Charles Tynte and Colonel Coxe in the forthcoming election – 'which I promised him'.

Six weeks before James had accompanied Mr Melliar to Bridgwater, 'to be at the meeting of the Gentlemen &c. of this County ... to put in nomination two proper Persons to represent this County in Parliament':

> Sir Charles Tynte and M[r] Cox, Lieutenant Colonel of the Somerset Militia, were the two Persons put in nomination, they having by much the majority – M[r] Trivilian opposed them, and is determined to stand the Poll at the Election –
>
> (*Diary*, 12/10/1767)

Sir Charles was one of the two sitting members, the other, Sir Thomas Acland, had made it known that he would not be seeking re-election; hence the candidature of Richard Hippisley Coxe.

The General Election was eventually set for March of the following year and Woodforde found himself in a difficult spot. Normally he might not expect the county election to be contested but because of

Trevelyan's insistence upon his name going forward it would be remembered that he had promised – and, more importantly, had promised Mr Melliar – his vote for Coxe. But he was also entitled, as a member of Convocation, to vote in the election for the two Oxford University seats; an election that certainly would be contested. He could not be in both Somerset and Oxford.

As the great day approached the tension – 'so much Hurry and disturbance' as Woodforde called it – mounted. Intrigue and bribery were, of course, the key to success in eighteenth century elections and on 1 March at Castle Cary:

> Great Dinners &c. given to day at the George Inn and the Angel
> by Sir Charles Tynte's & Mr Cox's Friends …
> There were a great multitude of all Sorts, gentle and simple
> Mr Cox himself was there – Bells ringing &c. and a great Pro=
> =cession through Town with Musick playing & guns firing –

Woodforde was dining at Mr Creed's in South Cary and

> Mr Cox himself being there we both went out and spoke to
> him and we both went back with him with the Procession
> down to the George Inn, where we drank success to him …

Five days later Woodforde's commitment to Coxe was thrown into doubt when he –

> Had a Letter this Evening from Reynel of New College
> for my Vote for Mr Page at the approaching general
> Election for the University of Oxford –

This would appear to have placed Woodforde in a difficult position but it may also have provided him with a welcome 'get out' from an embarrassing dilemma. It is clear from the entry for 11 October 1767 that the idea of going to Bridgwater to support the Whigs Tynte and Coxe was entirely Melliar's –

> Mr Will: Melliar sent me a Note this morning to desire
> me to be at the meeting of the Gentlemen &c …
> …… it was
> so civil a note that I could not refuse him –

Likewise, in the year after the election, the idea of going to Wells in support of the radical John Wilkes came from Mr Creed.[1] Oxford-educated, country clergymen in general were Tories but

what Woodforde's real political beliefs were at this time it is difficult to fathom.

Four days after receiving Reynel's letter Woodforde sought the advice and support of his friend Parson Penny, 'who came into the Country Yesterday from the Duke of Beaufort's where he is Chaplain to his grace'. The Duke, being a staunch Tory and supporter of the University – he was one of the Radcliffe trustees – his mind was quickly made up –

> As the University & County Elections are likely to be
> at the same time we are determined to serve the former –
> (*Diary*, 9/3/1768)

The following day it was Trevelyan's turn to treat the voters of Cary and district, supplying 'great entertainment' at the Ansford Inn. Woodforde was once more approached, this time by a fellow clergyman and Wykehamist William Langdon. How he responded we do not know.

The entry for 9 March outlines the nature of the contest for the two university seats:

> There are five Candidates Sir Roger Newdigate
> D^{r} Hay Dean of the Archers [sic][2] M^{r} Fitzmaurice M^{r} Jen=
> =kinson – both Courtiers and Lord Bute's Men –

The diarist misses out Page's name but then he goes on to say 'Mr Penny and myself are for the two first' and it later becomes clear that he means Newdigate and Page.

The politics of the eighteenth century university are by no means easy to disentangle. Steven Watson oversimplifies in describing

> The University of Oxford … [as] comically 'tory', with its politics often a struggle between high tories and Jacobites repudiating, apparently, the whole Hanoverian world. The 'toryism' under analysis turns out to be merely a cant phrase to explain its hatred of royal interference.[3]

The Tory vote would in fact often be split between those who still cleaved to the Old Interest, that is to say, had sympathies for the Pretender, and those who, although reconciled to the Act of Succession, wished to remain independent of the Court and of the Crown-appointed bench of bishops. Such a division would

encourage supporters of the New Interest – Whigs of various complexions – in the belief that they could advance from their traditional strongholds – Exeter, Merton, Wadham and, especially, Christ Church – and win over the university.

To describe Jenkinson and Fitzmaurice as 'Courtiers and Lord Bute's Men', shows Woodforde's ignorance of both the subtleties and dynamics of the political world. On his accession in 1760 George III had sought to avoid the intrigues and in-fighting of ministers and parties, which had been such a feature of his grandfather's reign, by looking to his favourite John Stuart, third Earl of Bute; untainted – unlike such powerful politicians as Pitt and Newcastle, with the accumulated grime (and, in Pitt's case, glory) of political experience. The unpopular Treaty of Paris of 1763 and the still more unpopular, especially in the West Country, Cider tax of the same year, designed to help pay for the war, had undermined Bute's credentials in both parliament and the country. He was the particular target of John Wilkes's intemperate but witty and effective anti-Scottish tirades in the *North Briton*.[4] Thus, while Charles Jenkinson had some years before been keen to attach himself to Bute, he was by now just as keen to disassociate himself from that fallen nobleman and from all suggestion of 'dependence' upon the Court.

Thomas Fitzmaurice followed in the footsteps of his brother the earl of Shelburne. At Christ Church ten years before Shelburne had cultivated the Tory minority there but he now allied himself with the Rockingham Whigs in adopting a conciliatory policy towards the Americans. Fitzmaurice hoped to draw cross-party support from those who wished to avoid a hard anti-American line.

Dr George Hay was the nominee of Thomas Fry, president of St John's and a supporter of Wilkes. He was a Grenvillite Whig who threatened to take some of the votes on which Jenkinson had been relying.

Sir Roger Newdigate – founder of the famous prize for English verse – had been one of the university's representatives in the Commons since 1750 (the other, Sir Walter Bagot, had died earlier in the year). A typical Tory country gentleman, he was not the type to shift his position with each change of the political wind. He knew what he wasn't rather more definitely than what he was:

I can't answer your Qu. What my policy is? I am only sure it is neither Cumberland nor Pelham, landed men must love peace, men proscribed and abus'd for 50 years together [should] be presented with foolscaps if they make Ladders for tyrant Whigs to mount by. I like the King and shall be with his Ministers as long as I think an honest man ought, and believe it best not to Lose the Country gentleman in the Courtier.[5]

From the same stable and potentially representing the same constituency was Sir Francis Page, squire of Steeple Aston, Oxfordshire. Jenkinson's supporters regarded Page as a 'forlorn hope' – 'an honest country gentleman, hospitable, good natured' but little more. As it was he was to draw support not only from New College, of which he was a graduate (Reynel was his campaign manager) but also, thanks to first cousin Henry Barton, Warden of Merton, from that traditional bastion of Whiggery.[6]

Meanwhile, back in the sticks, country clergymen were preparing to converge upon their alma mater to cast their votes. On 12 March Woodforde received a further epistle from Reynel no doubt pressing the significance of his attendance. Any discomfort he may have felt over the 'promise' he now intended not to keep was banished on Sunday 20 March when –

I read Prayers & Preached this morning at C. Cary Church
I read Prayers & Preached this afternoon at Ansford Church
Most People appeared in blue Ribbands at the Church,
on Account of Trevylyan's declining the Election ...

Thus it was that on the following day, his conscience clear, Woodforde set off, on horseback for Oxford – 'My Man Luke [Barnard] went with me to carry my Portmanteau'. En route he met Mr Christopher Tatchell 'of Wadham Coll:' –

... going to Oxford on the same Occasion as myself, though he is of a different way of thinking from myself, for I am for Sir Roger Newdigate and M[r] Page and he is for M[r] Jenkinson alone –

They dined at the Black Lion at Deptford Batch where Woodforde had 'some little Chat' about the Somerset election with Mr Mildmay – 'a blue Ribband in his Hat' – who he had last seen speaking for Coxe at the Bridgwater meeting the previous October.

He and Tatchell then rode on for Everleigh where they spent the night.

As they neared Oxford they met more Oxonians heading for the ballot and Woodforde could hardly have been surprised on reaching the city to find the King's Arms in Holywell already full, but he managed to find accommodation at the Star in the Cornmarket. There he discovered that –

> Sir Roger Newdigate and M^{r} Page are likely to suc=
> =ceed I find, but to Morrow shall see how it is –
> I wish they might succeed – Very great and powerful
> Interest has been made to get in M^{r} Jenkinson.

The following day he breakfasted with an old clergyman 'of Braze-Nose Coll: who came out of Buckinghamshire … & on my side' and then –

> At ten o'clock I went to the Convocation House in my Gown
> and Cap, and took out my Regency, that is, I took two
> Oaths – the Fees were paid before for me being – 2 : 10 : 6
> After that the election for our university came on –

Interestingly, I can find no record of him having paid back the money for the fees, raising the possibility that it had been paid for him as a means of enticing him to Oxford; the subject perhaps of Reynel's second letter?

On the eve of the poll Fitzmaurice had withdrawn but, regarding Jenkinson as too closely associated with the Court interest, had instructed his manager to transfer his support to Page. In the words of W. R. Ward – ' "The cry of independence was so general that all persons were to be proscribed who did not vote for Page" – and the doom of Jenkinson's case was sealed.'[7]

Woodforde then goes on to describe the election and its aftermath:

> … Sir Roger Newdigate, D^{r} Hay, M^{r} Page and M^{r}
> Jenkinson were proposed, and as we send but two
> Members a Poll was imediately begun, which
> lasted for six Hours and on casting up the Poll
> there were for Sir Roger Newdigate 352 – for M^{r} Page
> 296 – for M^{r} Jenkinson 198 – & for D^{r} Hay only 62 –
> therefore the two former were declared duly
> elected by the Vice Chancellor D^{r} Durell of Hartford

College – I am glad I am once right
There were four Scrutators who took the Poll, and
each Candidate had a Scrutator – Reynel was
Scrutator for M^r^ Page – The others I knew not –
I was close to Reynel all the Time in the Convo=
=cation House, which was not over till 5. o'clock.
We beat M^r^ Jenkinson quite hallow
I dined with Reynel at six o'clock at the Kings Head
in High Street – and for my Dinner & Wine &c. – p^d^ 0 - 2 - 6
I spent the Evening and Night till 3. in the morning in
the Sen^r^ Com: Room with Reynel, D^r^ Pigot, M^r^ Bridle,
Whitmore, Cotton & others –
For Wine &c. in the Com: Room – p^d^ 0 - 1 - 6

Unsurprisingly, the diarist tells us that he did not stir from his bed in the Star until one in the afternoon of the following day – 'keeping such bad hours and drinking so much last night'. He again spent the evening in the Senior Common Room of New College, 'with a great Number' but 'went to my Quarters in good Time this night.' The next morning he and Tatchell set off back to the West Country but he was still to experience one further, somewhat macabre, consequence of the general election. Between Hungerford and Everleigh they overtook –

... a Hearse with a dead Corpse in it (Lord Ar=
=chers Brother who died at Warwick Electioneering)
attended with two Mourning Coaches, full of Slaves
&c. and all merry inclined ...

By 'Slaves' the diarist means they were supporters of the Court party. It is perhaps rather misleading to say, as does Roy Winstanley in his note on this passage in Volume 3 of the Society's edition of the diary, that they were in the same camp as 'Hays and Jenkinson' while 'at this time the diarist was still in sympathy with the rebellious Wilkes'. Hayes, as we have seen, had Wilkesite support while Woodforde's enthusiasm for Wilkes is at best suspect. Newdigate and Page, for whom he had just cast his votes, were neither 'Slaves' on the one hand nor Wilkesites on the other.

At Everleigh Woodforde bade farewell to Tatchell, who was pressing on into Somerset, and stayed the night, with the merry mourners, at the inn, arriving back at Ansford the following day.

* * *

Frederick North, 2nd Earl of Guilford by Nathaniel Dance (National Portrait Gallery, London) – showing North in the robes of Chancellor of the University of Oxford.

On the morning of 1 October 1772 Woodforde set forth on a similar journey to that of five years before but this time to vote for a Chancellor for the university. A week before he had received –

> … a Letter from Master Sen^{r} of New Coll: to let me know that Lord Litchfield our Chancellor was dead and that there would [be] an Election of a new one in his Room, Saturday October the third, and

therefore desires me to be present at it –
Had another Letter from Whitmore upon the same.

George Henry Lee, third Earl of Lichfield, had been the Chancellor of Oxford University for ten years. He had died on 19 September, aged 54. As we shall see it seems likely that the letters from Robert Master and Edward Whitmore not only desired Woodforde's presence but also indicated for whom he should vote, namely for William Bouverie, first Earl of Radnor.

Candidates for the chancellorship usually came from among the nobility of Oxfordshire or the adjoining counties; if they were themselves graduates of the university so much the better. On this occasion, in addition to Radnor, whose country seat was at Longford Castle in Wiltshire, the candidates were Lord Abingdon, the Duke of Beaufort and the Prime Minister himself, Lord North. Abingdon, tainted by a close connection with Wilkes, quickly left the field. Beaufort had by this time become Master of Horse to the Queen and Lord Lieutenant of Monmouthshire so that, despite his impeccable university credentials, he had 'some particles of *Dependence* still hanging about him'.

As the campaign had progressed the 'independents', always strongly represented at Oxford, appeared to be turning increasingly to Lord Radnor whose leading supporter was the eminent international lawyer William Scott, a fellow of University College, who had been tutor to one of the Bouverie boys. Univ's support was, however, divided and Radnor's most unequivocal encouragement came from New College.

As Prime Minister, Frederick, Lord North could hardly claim 'independence' but his family home was at Wroxton in Oxfordshire, he was a graduate of Trinity and had the powerful support of the Vice-Chancellor and Master of University College, Nathan Wetherell, one of Oxford's canniest politicians. As MP for Banbury, North had made his reputation by his strong opposition to Wilkes.

On 2 October – 'a misty morning with a little Rain' – Woodforde continued on his journey to Oxford. At the Nag's Head, six miles out of Everleigh, he stopped for a 'very good' pint of beer and, between Hungerford and Farnborough, caught up with

the four following Gentlemen, Stockwell of C.C. Coll:
Maud Chaplain of C.C. Coll: Boys and Bowls both
Fellows of Trinity Coll: who were all going to Oxon
to the Election – Stockwell, Maud and myself are
for Lord Radnor, Boys & Bowls for Lord North –

Upon arrival, Woodforde stabled his horse at the Blue Boar and, with Stockwell and Maud, hurried off –

... to a meeting of my Lord Radnor's
Friends in High Street, where I met our Warden
who was Chairman ...

The meeting went on until eleven at night. Various efforts were made to come to an agreement with Beaufort's supporters, meeting at the Mitre, but to no avail, and the gathering broke up –

... after coming to
this determination, to drop all thoughts of L. Radnor
as we could raise no more votes than 73. in all
and that the Duke of Beauforts Friends would
not come over to us ...
... It is there=
=fore to be an Unanimous Election for L^{d} North
declared to by both meetings, as an opposition
to him cannot be anywhere respectable –

The presumably despondent diarist then went back to the Blue Boar, had 'Welch Rabbit and a Pint of Porter' and went to bed in 'an indifferent Room – the Inn being very full'.

The diary entry for the following day (3 October 1772) is Woodforde at his very best. He vividly describes the scene in the Convocation House – 'The Doctors &c. all in their Robes – the Dean of Christchurch D^{r} Markham who is Bishop of Chester appeared there in his Lawn Sleeves of which he is not a little proud' – and the conduct of the Election:

After the Poll is finished the Proctors reckon up the
Votes, and as they pronounce it so it stands, the Proctors
are sworn to do justly – None but the Proctors see the
Poll – after that a Candle is brought to the Table
and one of the Proctors delivers the Poll to one
of the Beadles which he burns immediately be=
=fore them –

He goes on to describe the appointment of the 'Delegacy' to go to the Chancellor-elect to invest him with 'the insignia of the University'.[8]

While in the Convocation House Woodforde was doubtless pleased to be approached by the Warden of New College, John Oglander, who invited him to the Lodgings to dine 'with him, his brother Harry Oglander, George Bridle, Gother & Miller'. This raises the whole question of the nature of the relationship between Woodforde and the Warden. They have often been described as 'friends' yet Woodforde had not voted for Oglander Snr when the wardenship had fallen vacant four years before and, although in Oxford, he boycotted the election:

> I did not go to the Election, as did not many more having no chance for our friend Sale –
>
> (*Diary*, 19/8/1768)

It may be that Woodforde supported Sale, some 12 years senior to Oglander, because he was a believer in Buggin's turn.[9] There is some evidence to support this view. Furthermore not only was Oglander the junior of the three candidates he was from a family of Whigs and, according to Felix Erith, 'left wing Whigs at that'.[10] The youngest sister of John and Harry had been allowed to marry Serjeant Glynn, a strong supporter of Wilkes. Whatever the relationship between Woodforde and the Warden, by 1772 Oglander appears to have had no difficulty in leading a unified college, the diarist included, behind the Whig Lord Radnor despite the overwhelming support for his Tory opponent in the university.

In conclusion, what can one say about Woodforde's own political opinions? It is, I think, too simple to assert that as a young man he was a Whig with Wilkesite sympathies and that in later life he became, under a influence of John Custance, a Tory. This would not explain why in 1768 he voted for the Tories Newdigate and Page in the parliamentary election and then, in 1772, voted for the Whig Radnor for the Chancellorship. He was, I think, happy to be led – by the influential townsfolk of Cary (Melliar and Creed), by the Warden, and by the Squire. When no such leadership existed a vote for the most senior candidate avoided unpleasant 'political' decisions. Remember that he had but one objection to becoming Master of Bedford School:

The only bad thing belonging to it, is, being a Borough Town, and there is no such thing as being neuter –

(Diary, 1/9/1773)

Notes and References

1. M. L. Brayne, *Woodforde, Wilkes and Liberty*, Journal XXVII, 1.
2. JW meant Dean of Arches; a judge appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Ecclesiastical Court. The position still exists.
3. J. Steven Watson, *The Reign of George III: 1760-1815* (1960).
4. Brayne, *op. cit.*
5. W. R. Ward, *Georgian Oxford: University Politics in the Eighteenth Century* (1958).
6. Ward, *op. cit.*
7. Ward, *op. cit.*
8. When the delegates of the Convocation went to Downing Street for the installation Lord North 'gave great satisfaction' by greeting them with an unscripted Latin oration – Ward, *op. cit.*
9. The three candidates were: George James Sale (bapt. 30/11/1728); Edward Whitmore (bapt. 5/9/1733); John Oglander (bapt. 26/9/1737).
10. F. Erith, *The Oglander Family*, Journal XII, 1.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

On 2 January I ventured into a deserted Norfolk Record Office with a request to view the Ling Survey 1811 from the Weston Box. I had timed it well: the 2006 accession has not yet been catalogued and any requested document has to be extracted from the complete collection. The staff had leisure to produce the handwritten exercise book of 72 pages, probably relating to the enclosure of the village, which has revealed the land farmed by Humphrey and Susannah Garrod from the time of their marriage in 1784 until they moved to Hempstead (nr. Holt in north Norfolk) c. 1812.

The land farmed by Humphrey was owned by Samuel Thorne and consisted of 36+ acres of arable, 11+ acres of pasture and 2½ acres of woodland, and the summary at the end of the book records the names of fields, including King's Grove, Wrongs, 3-Cornered Close, Hogs Back Hill and Long Sandy Hill, enabling the land to be identified on the present Ordnance Survey map. It lies in the hamlet of Lyng Easthaugh, adjacent to Weston Longville itself, south of Weston Old Hall and west of the road from Lenwade Bridge to Hockering.

Much of the woodland has disappeared but Wrongs Covert, Well and Middle Grove and Three Cornered Covert remain. The Garrods lived in a farmhouse with a large garden and the present Wellgrove Farmhouse and buildings could well be that site.

In 1993 the Lyng History Group published *Lyng – A Miscellany* describing in great detail the geology of the area. Apart from the sandy nature of the soil, the chalk deposits and layers of clay, during the Ice Age large boulders were deposited in The Grove at Lyng Easthaugh. *The Eastern Daily Press* of March 1939 carried the article "A Giant Boulder and its Legend" – a stone in The King's Grove which will bleed if you prick it with a pin! Local people never walked through this area in the dark and children living in Lyng Easthaugh were let out of the village school 20 minutes early on winter afternoons so that they could reach home before dark. Local tradition maintains that King Edmund fought a battle here against the Danes and in the nineteenth century skeletons were unearthed in the area.

Farming in Lyng must have been heartbreaking and backbreaking work. In 1836, when Humphrey and Sukey were dead and their children were enjoying their substantial inheritance, the Rector and churchwardens of Lyng raised a loan of £303 from the British Exchequer and, with a further sum from the rates, sent 20 adult and 30 children paupers to Canada to ease "the burden on the rates and seek to reduce it to suit the property owners".

Yours faithfully,

Phyllis Stanley
Norwich

Editor's note: For more on the Sukey/Humphrey story readers are referred to Mrs Stanley's article *Sukey Boxley – "I wish I knew what became of her"* in Journal XXXVII, 2.

WOODFORDE AND THE "KILLER CLOUD" (1)

I hope that other members of our Society may have seen the wonderful TV programme regarding the late 18th century volcanic eruption that took place in Iceland and the devastation it caused to the peoples of the western European countries and England.*

How, you may ask, did this programme relate to our Parson? Well, apparently this eruption in 1783 sent up into our atmosphere millions of tons of toxic gas, which in some freak accident of nature, instead of flowing north as the winds usually did at that time of the year, turned south, and spread the deadly gasses over the area previously described. The eruption lasted about six months, enough to create violent storms, dense fog and, later, a severe winter, the latter created by the volcanic particles reflecting the sun's rays back into space. The reasons for the sky turning from red to yellow etc were unknown to the people living at that time and sickness and subsequent death it caused was put down to some kind of plague, or as Woodforde reported in his journal of 2 September, "The Whirligigousticon", which Lizzy and Jack appeared to be suffering

from along with many others in the parish. This disaster was analysed in the TV programme as to its effects on the population and they estimated that thousands, may be millions, of people might have died as a result.

So I rushed to my Woodforde Diaries for confirmation to see what effect it had had on the people mentioned in his diary for 1783. And sure enough, there, in black and white, commencing about August of that year, was confirmation of the unusual weather and sickness that was rampant throughout his household and parish. This wonderful programme, which I hope will be repeated, now added to my understanding more fully of Woodforde's records and his daily notes gave us confirmation of this disaster. The reason for Woodforde's servants' sickness was obviously unknown to him at that time, as he records no strong smells in the atmosphere, such as sulphur, which might have given him and Doctor Thorne a clue as to these strange sicknesses and events. However, he did record people being frightened by seeing a large ball of fire in the sky.

The people who appeared to have suffered most, leading to subsequent death, were basically people who had to work in this chemical environment: they were the farm labourers and Norfolk certainly had plenty of them.

Notes

* The programme to which Mr Houghton refers was 'Killer Cloud' – Timewatch, BBC2, Friday 19 January 2007.

Editor's note: I wrote a short piece on this subject for the Journal in 1993 – *James Woodforde, Gilbert White and a Volcanic Eruption*, Journal XXVI, 4, but at that time had no idea that the health of people so far away from Iceland as Norfolk had been affected.

WOODFORDE AND THE "KILLER CLOUD" (2)

On 19 January this year there was a most interesting television programme called 'Timewatch – The Killer Cloud'. It was a semi-dramatised account of a severe volcanic eruption in Iceland in 1783, showing the effects of this on the atmosphere, the people and agriculture of mainland Europe and, especially, Britain and Iceland itself.

The researchers for the programme had used many contemporary sources, particularly from Iceland. From Britain we had extracts from Gilbert White's letters and various newspaper accounts. Nothing from Woodforde. So I thought it might be worth seeing just what he did comment on in the summer of 1783.

The eruption took place in mid-June, releasing enormous quantities of sulphurous gases into the atmosphere. The wind drifted the cloud across to Germany, France, Holland and, finally, Britain. Effects began to appear by the end of June:

June 21 – Morn' hazy & cold air

June 23 – Morn' very fair & hot
A smart frost this Evening

June 24 – Morn' very fair hot
A smart frost again this Night

June 25 – Very uncommon hazy & hot Weather
The Sun very red at setting

June 26 - Very uncommon, hot, misty Days – with
Cold Nights

June 28 – The Barley & Oats look quite scorched
By the Frost – Almost all Grass appears
affected by the same.

The weather continued like this, becoming extremely hot and hazy, with thunder and lightning:

July 12 – Very uncommon Weather still – & dread=
=ful tempests in many Places & many lives
Lost – Morn' very hot indeed

July 13– It being excessive hot this morning one
Poor Woman by name Hester Durham

Fainted in Church. The Weather still
Uncommon hazy & Sun red.

The hot, sultry weather continued.

July 20 – about 10 at Night a very heavy Tempest
Began – the lightning was very dreadful

July 28 – This has been the hottest day this year & I believe
The hottest that I ever felt

Aug. 8 – My Servant Boy Jack Warton taken very ill
In the fever that is going about – I gave him
Some Rhubarb

Aug. 9 – My Under Maid Lizzy Greaves taken very ill
Also in the fever …
Both of our sick Servants gone to bed & very ill

Aug. 19 – Very Sultry with Thunder – A Large Ball of Fire
For miles around was seen Last Night

Aug. 20 – Dr Thorne called to see my Servants again
This morn'. People are daily falling down in
The reigning illness

Aug. 25 – Afternoon very tempestuous with violent Thunder
& Lightning & Rain

The illness of the two servants, also the great heat, the fog and the storms, continued into September. The TV programme researchers had found records of greatly increased mortality rates this year than was normal for the summer, as the sulphur in the atmosphere affected people's lungs. Now Ben and Will became ill too:

Sept. 2 – Almost all the House is ill in the present
Disorder & which is called the Whirligigousticon
By the faculty. It is almost in every House
In every Village.

Sep. 18 – Ben very bad today, Will also bad and Lizzy
worse

By October things were improving. The weather was more normal, as the gas cloud dispersed and the invalids were improving.

Oct. 6 – My Folks continue Better, thank God for it.

It had been a very unpleasant and indeed calamitous summer for many in Britain, who had no idea that their troubles came from far-away Iceland, where the suffering of the people was even more dreadful.

Although the fog had now gone, the 'killer cloud' had not yet finished the work of devastation. A harsh, exceptionally bitter winter ensued, particularly hard on the poor. Squire Custance and Woodforde were asked by the Overseers of the Poor to "subscribe something to the Poor during this very severe Weather".

Feb. 14 – The Snow continues as deep as ever on the Ground.

March 20 – It froze within Doors last Night & very Cold it is today.

April 2 – Many Farmers are now greatly distressed for Their Stock – I never knew so severe nor so Long a Winter as this has turned out – the Land has not been free from Snow since The 23 of December last.

Well, it ended at last, more normal weather returning as the ash particles dispersed from the upper atmosphere but, as the programme warned us, "It could happen again".

A GIRL WHO 'EXCEEDED EVERYTHING I EVER SAW'

Small people exerted a powerful attraction on James Woodforde. Memorably, he was happy to pay 2/6d to –

> the Polish Dwarf, Joseph Boruwlaski
> ... he is
> only three feet three Inches in height, quite
> well-proportioned every way, very polite, sensible
> and very sprightly, & gave us a tune upon
> the Guitar and one Tune of his own composing –
> (*Diary*, 29 July 1788)[1]

A portrait of Boruwlaski, his head barely rising above the level of the table on which his guitar rests, appeared on the front cover of the Journal for Autumn 2004 (Vol. XXXVII, 3). Boruwlaski, however, would have towered over Polly Coleshill, "a little woman only 33 Inches high and 31 Years of Age" who arrived at the Parsonage accompanied by three men, one of whom, "the Principal, was a black with a french Horn, blowing it all the way up the Yard to the Kitchen Door".[2]

Between Count Boruwlaski and little Miss Coleshill in height was "the Dwarf Man" James Harris of Coventry – "He is exactly 3 Feet high, very well proportioned in every respect". Woodforde saw him at Norwich on 17 November 1784. But more surprising than Harris was –

> ...a Girl which exceeded every
> thing I ever saw – she had no Hands or Arms and
> yet wonderfully cleaver with her Feet – She cut out
> a Watch Paper for me whilst I was there with her Toes
> She opened my Watch and put it in after alone –
> Her Name, was Jane Hawtin, about 22 Years old
> She talks very sensible and appears very happy in her
> Situation – She uses her Toes as well as any their Fingers.
> I gave her for cutting the Watch Paper – 0 : 1 : 0
> To the Dwarf gave 0 : 0 : 6[3]

In an article which I wrote for the Journal in 1990 I asked "whether Jane too was from Coventry and, if so, whether it was to this that she owed her unusual expertise".[4] The point being that at that time

Coventry was emerging as one of the country's leading watch-making centres, alongside London and Liverpool. During the 1780s no fewer than forty watchmakers were to be admitted to the freedom of the city.

I never really expected this question to be answered but in a recent issue of the Journal of the Coventry Family History Society there it was.[5] As well as the accompanying picture the article includes an 'Account of the ingenious performances of MISS HAWTIN, who

was born without arms; with notices respecting several other persons with the like deficiency', published 3 May 1813 and according to which:

> She was a native of Coventry, born without arms, and remarkable for the dexterity with which her feet performed all the offices of the hands. With her toes she would cut out watch papers, with such ingenuity and dispatch as to astonish every beholder; and numbers of these papers are yet kept as great curiosities by many who visited her. She could likewise use her needle and pen with great facility. These extraordinary talents she exhibited to the great gratification of the public, in almost every town of England, till shortly before her death.

Editor's Note

I am grateful to Doris Pails of the Coventry Family History Society and to Vivien Mattocks, editor of that Society's Journal, for permission to reproduce the above material.

References

1. M. L. Brayne, *A Tune of his own composing*, Journal XXX, 1.
2. *Diary*, Vol. 11, 21 July 1787.
3. *Diary*, Vol. 10, 17 November 1784.
4. M. L. Brayne, *From Coventry, Lilliput ... and Elsewhere*, Journal XXIII, 3.
5. D. Pails, *The Amazing Miss Hawtin*, Coventry FHS Journal, Vol. 6, No. 8.

THE LAST OF THE LOWER HOUSE

This building was, along with Ansford Parsonage, his birthplace, one of the two focal points of James Woodforde's early life; a place where, to cite the words of D. G. Rossetti about Chatterton, his "nested home-loves" were enshrined – although the prosaic Parson would never have dreamed of using such terms. It was situated in the lower area of the village, hence its familiar name, near to where the lane which skirts the churchyard runs into Ansford Hill. The spot on which it had stood can plainly be seen, since it was never rebuilt and a neat grassy rectangle is still there to mark its exact site.

The house belonged to his mother's inheritance, a part of the ancestral property of the Collins family. It was Tudor or Elizabethan, less ancient than the originally medieval Parsonage, but must have looked older, since the latter had been much altered, given a Georgian façade, and generally transformed into the likeness of a standard eighteenth century gentleman's residence. Ironically, the image of the Lower House was never transmitted to posterity while it was a living organism, a place which real people called home, and were happy or sad there according to their natures and the chances and contingencies of human life. But we have some idea of its appearance from a photograph taken when it was a burnt-out hulk, a melancholy wreck awaiting final demolition. It is by no means easy to guess what it must have looked like in Woodforde's day, but its elaborate front entrance preserves a certain grandeur even as a ruin.

At the time of the share-out of the mother's real property, the house was in that one of the three lots that went to Brother Jack. James was his brother's tenant and paid rent while living there, from 1765 when he became his father's full-time assistant, to 1771 when Samuel Woodforde died and he moved back to the Parsonage for a short time before he went into residence again at New College.

He was not, clearly, a man given to thinking much about the past, his own or that of anyone else; but if he did once or twice reflect on his time at the Lower House, he probably thought that he would have enjoyed it well enough, happily absorbed in the "housekeeping" he so loved, if only his brothers had not spoiled it all for him. While they all lived together there, night after night their drunken humours

got him out of bed because they made rest impossible. He always felt wretched next day, being a man who required a full allowance of sleep if he were to function adequately.

After he left the Lower House, he scarcely mentioned it in the diary again. In 1789, on holiday from Norfolk, he had had the reconciliation with Cousin Frank which led to his being a guest at dinner in the house where he was born. No comparable scene records his entering the portals of the Lower House, although he must have gone inside it again since John Woodforde, still its owner, had moved in there. I don't know for certain, but he was probably there up to the time he left Ansford altogether and went to live in Bath.

Quite recently our President received a file of newspaper clippings and other memorabilia for the local museum which he runs so efficiently (I have heard some very nice things said about it by visitors who come from a long way from Castle Cary). Among these were three accounts of the fire which destroyed the Lower House. By 1892 it was known as Ansford House but in Woodforde's time that name was given to the property at the top of the hill owned by the Pounsetts and occupied by the Whites. Jenny Pounsett, his sister, left it to her daughter and only child, but at her death it passed to her husband and so out of the hands of any member of the Woodforde family. The quondam Lower House had also long severed its connection with the Woodfordes when in 1892 it was destroyed by fire.

The first of the cuttings is from the 'Bristol Mercury', issue dated 26/4/1892. It reads as follows:

> *Ansford House burnt*
> Ansford House, the old residence of the Woodforde family at Ansford in Somerset, was completely destroyed by fire in the early morning of Sunday. The occupants, Mr R. Gould and his family, were aroused by a smell of smoke soon after 1 a.m. and shortly afterwards the house was in flames, the fire having apparently originated in one of the chimneys. A small proportion of the furniture was got out, but no attempt was made at saving the building, which, being very old and thatched, burnt with great rapidity, and was soon a heap of ruins. The house was a quaint specimen of Elizabethan architecture. It contained several relics of

> Glastonbury Abbey and other interesting curiosities, all of which were sacrificed to the flames. It was the property of the Rev. J. and Mr R. Woodforde, and had been in the possession of their ancestors ever since its erection. Fortunately both the house and its contents were insured.

The second account, in the 'Western Chronicle' of 29/4/1892, is copied from the above, and slightly longer and more detailed. The house is called "quaint" in the opening sentence, and "thatched" is followed by a parenthesis: "dating from the reign of Good Queen Bess" [!]. One passage suggests that the reporter was familiar with local details not known to the Bristol writer:

> The grounds adjoining are rich in fossils, images, and other relics of the past, including some cannons which were fired on Lodge Hill on the occasion of George III's jubilee, and one which gained an unenviable notoriety in the beginning of the century by blowing a man to atoms on the occasion of some festivities at Galhampton House (now pulled down), the former seat of Col. Woodforde, grandfather of the present owners.

The colonel, of course, was Nephew Bill, sticking to the title he had borne in the Volunteers, in spite of the way he had left that body. The knowledge that he apparently played some part in causing an explosion that blew a man "to atoms" will not, I think, altogether surprise us.

Editor's note: This article originally appeared in Journal XXX, 1, Spring 1998.

HENRY BATHURST (1744-1837), BISHOP OF NORWICH

His first sixty years

In his talk at the Oxford Frolic, our chairman gave Henry Bathurst as an example of a character from Parson Woodforde's diary rather different from the caricature of the eighteenth century university.[1] Readers of the Norfolk part of the diary will be aware of references between 1777 and 1785 to Dr Bathurst: 'my old friend and brother Collegian'.[2]

Dr Bathurst was non-resident incumbent of the Norfolk parishes of the Witchinghams, left in the dubious care of an impoverished curate. Shortly after Woodforde had received his Norfolk benefice, Bathurst too had taken this New College living (together with one in Norwich city) as an additional source of income, but with no intention of living in Norfolk. Blessed with aristocratic and political connections, his cousin being the 2nd Earl Bathurst (1714-94), Dr Bathurst was by 1775 comfortably installed as a Canon at Christ Church Oxford, where he lived. Over four years younger than Woodforde, Bathurst had been 'fast-tracked' by virtue of those connections. It was out of such earlier friendship and his own good nature, and with only a vague mention of a future gift of some books by way of thanks, Woodforde acceded to a request put to him in January 1777 by letter.[3] He agreed to collect Bathurst's Witchingham tithes and as unpaid 'agent' generally to supervise financially there. Their relationship had for some eight years continued by correspondence, until Bathurst appeared briefly and without warning at Weston Longville.[4] Bathurst had been visiting the bishop in Norwich, possibly with the primary purpose of giving up these Norfolk livings, which he did that same year. He stopped to see Woodforde *en route* to his curate at Witchingham. He could afford to resign them, for he was to be instituted (for a second time) to a family living near the Bathurst seat at Cirencester.

There was little or nothing to link the two men after 1785. Henry Bathurst continued to live in Oxford, travelling widely in England and Ireland, having married an Irish lady in 1780. He was cultivating his many connections with those of influence. Unable to compete with them financially, it was gratifying to him to receive in

1795 two offers of further preferment. One was to an Irish bishopric, with the additional understanding that he would be translated to become Archbishop of Dublin when the post fell vacant. It was the *other* offer that he accepted, exchanging his canonry at Oxford for the 'second best stall' at Durham Cathedral. So he moved his household north, but continued to travel widely as before. He also 'took the waters', originally at Cheltenham, but latterly at Great Malvern, a place which became sufficiently precious to his wife and himself that it is there that they chose to be buried.

That was Bathurst's situation at the time of Parson Woodforde's death in the comparative obscurity of his Norfolk parsonage, a county with which Bathurst had severed his links in 1785. He was however to outlive Woodforde by 34 years, renewing his links with that county when he was in 1805 appointed Bishop of Norwich. The contrast between the two men was complete.

Bishops in the early nineteenth century

It was the prevailing culture that the established church was the moral face of the state. The substantial powers exercised by the House of Lords meant that the appointment of a new bishop was politically significant. Theological expertise and spiritual holiness were not the only considerations, and might even be outweighed by aristocratic connections. Since the principle of delegation of episcopal duties was accepted, personal pastoral gifts were less important. Furthermore, delegation also meant that, once enthroned, there was no occasion for a bishop to retire in the modern sense. There was at that time little sense of the diocese being a community, or indeed a unit of much significance to clergy or laity. Thus, when a particular charitable need was felt, it was met not by the diocese, but by an association set up for the specific purpose by nobility, lay gentlemen and clergy.

Apart from the work of his archdeacons, the chief instrument of personal control exercised by a bishop over his many parishes was his primary visitation.[5] Having been resident in London for five or six winter months as usual to attend the House of Lords, once in a few years the bishop would in May/June make his progress of several weeks around his diocese. The detail of dates would be

circulated. The bishop (with one or two staff) would spend two days in each of some two dozen centres, and longer in larger towns. Detailed instructions would be distributed in advance, with Articles of Enquiry designed to elicit an accurate picture of each parish and the fulfilment of duties. In 1806, Bathurst prefaced these directions with a request for cooperation of his clergy, admitting that 'he was very much unacquainted' with the diocese.[6] At each centre, the bishop was to be attended by the clergy and churchwardens of the surrounding parishes, who were to produce for inspection their personal legal credentials, and written answers to the enquiries. They were to hand in their terrier, the up-to-date detailed list of all the property goods and ornaments of the church. They had also to deliver a fully itemised copy of the register of all baptisms, marriages and burials. On paper, here was a thorough investigation, similar to a modern 'Ofsted' inspection, but in practice there is ample evidence that Norwich diocese had a reputation at this time of slackness of administration at the centre, and of response to it by parochial clergy.[7]

On the first day at each centre, in addition to these legal matters, the assembled company would attend worship, receive the bishop's 'charge', pay their financial dues and at their own expense dine together. Again, the principle suggests a positive influence, but the reality fell short. Instead of the Primary Visitation being conducted every three years, it was left in Norwich for seven. After conducting two visitations in person, in 1806 and 1813, this duty too the aged Bathurst delegated to others.

The second day was for Confirmation of those candidates, young persons of 14 and upwards, who had been both prepared and given a ticket of approval by their incumbent. Many would be in their twenties. Ticket in hand, they would be called into the church by parishes, and confirmed by name from a list handed in by the incumbent. Meanwhile, they would wait in the churchyard if fine, or a nearby house if not, the parishes being called alphabetically in an attempt to introduce some order. There is evidence from around the country of these occasions being rendered less than seemly spiritual occasions.

Henry Bathurst as bishop

Henry Bathurst had long been ambitious. He held strongly Whig views, which made somewhat unusual his appointment in 1805 to

the diocese of Norwich by the then ailing Tory Prime Minister, William Pitt the Younger. The diocese comprised some 1100 parishes, still incorporating the whole of Suffolk, as well as Norfolk. The bulk of the administration was delegated to four Archdeacons (including from 1814 Bathurst's son) and a small staff, encumbered at first by a notoriously inefficient secretary. Perhaps it was thought of as a temporary measure, but Bathurst was to remain in that post for 32 years, dying at the age of 92.

Bathurst presents to the historian two contrasting facets of personality. In personal manner he was mild and conciliatory, undemanding and with a reputation of being self-indulgent and even lazy. In certain principles however he was unyielding and uncompromising, and transferred to English debate firm views formed from his knowledge of Ireland. From before 1805 he favoured granting full rights of citizenship to the majority Catholics in Ireland. In his charge to his East Anglian clergy in 1806, his hearers being almost entirely Tory in attitude, he boldly advocated peace towards both Catholics and Protestant dissenters. In his maiden speech in the House of Lords in 1808 he aroused strong opposition by outspoken support for Catholic emancipation. The issue, which continued heatedly for over twenty further years, was not toleration of their forms of worship, but a matter of citizenship status which today we might term human rights. King George III was staunchly Protestant, and given to referring to his coronation oath to uphold the Church of England.

In 1812, in an extended private visit to Ireland, Bathurst openly defied convention by accepting the hospitality of Catholic leaders keen to honour him. Four times in the next ten years, politically isolated as he was, he championed in the House of Lords the cause of emancipation. When obliged by infirmity to cast his vote by proxy, he had his speech printed and circulated. Always he stressed the tenets of Christianity rather than the rights of the established church. In his later seventies, he was less in London and increasingly with his wife in Malvern for her health. In 1828 the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts both indicated and increased a more liberal attitude, and to Bathurst's great joy, in the following year a final bill for Catholic Emancipation became law. Only a few leading divines had believed that relief should be given on principle rather than Irish

expediency. The majority feared that the Church of England would lose its established status. To the Tory clergy of Norwich diocese, Bathurst was dangerously radical and lacking in judgment.

To their further alarm, the Whigs came into office after twenty-three years in opposition. Their first Reform Bill was only narrowly voted down in the House of Lords. Bathurst (voting by proxy) and one other bishop by supporting it had attracted increased hostility among their clergy. Incidentally, it was the Whig Prime Minister Earl Grey who in 1831 offered to Bathurst the post of Archbishop of Dublin then vacant. In declining it, he attempted to have the offer transferred to his son, the Archdeacon.[8]

Henry Bathurst cannot be blamed for living so long after consecration to the challenging post as bishop of Norwich. However, his age increased his weakness at administration and his lack of rigour, and he was widely criticised for over-delegation, passivity and personal failings. The diocese was notoriously lax.[9]

Notes

1. Saturday 9 Sept 2006, and *Journal* XXXIX No. 4, p. 4.
2. Diary 20 May 1785.
3. Nearly four years later, Woodforde purchsed *A Complete Body of Heraldry* in two volumes by J. Edmondson, newly published that year (Diary 2 Dec 1780). In his article in *Journal* XIX No. 3, p. 5, 'Henry Bathurst and a charming inscription', Roy Winstanley explores this aspect in some detail.
4. Diary 20 May 1785.
5. The editor reminds me that Woodforde described a primary visitation by an earlier bishop, Dr Horne (Diary 15 June 1791).
6. Norfolk Archive Centre DN/VIS 43/6.
7. For a recent summary of the evidence on what was known in some circles as 'the Dead See', see R. G. Wilson 'The Cathedral in the Georgian period'. In *Norwich Cathedral: Church City and Diocese 1096-1996*, ed. Ian Atherton *et al.* 1996.
8. Two of Bathurst's children published memoirs, listed below. For contrasting reasons both are unsatisfactory to historians. The Archdeacon reveals his intense disappointment at lakc of further preferment, whereas his sister was blind to her father's faults.
9. This paper owes much to: Nigel Aston's section in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (2004) vol. 4, p. 352; R. L. Winstanley 'Henry Bathurst and some members of his family', *Journal* VII No. 2, p. 5 (1974) and other writings; J. C. Hanekamp, *Henry Bathurst, period and portrait*, doctoral thesis in University of Utrecht, 1981.

The memoirs are by Archdeacon Bathurst (1837) 2 vols. and Tryphena Thistlethwayte (1853).

HOW WELL OFF WAS JAMES WOODFORDE?

I have recently finished reading the first sixteen volumes of the Society's edition of the Diary straight through and it occurred to me several times to wonder just how well off Woodforde was during the peak of his time at Weston Longville? To judge his expenditure with any precision seems to me impossible, since he leaves out quite a large proportion of his everyday disbursements, more particularly towards the end of his life. It might, however, be possible to work out from the internal evidence available what his income was. To do so it is necessary to come to some decisions and average some income over years when he spent much time in Somerset or when a curate received some of the fees.

The obvious place to start is on page 90 of the 1774 volume, where we find the first mention of Weston: "The Warden rec'd an Account of the Death of D^{r} Ridley, Rector of one of our Livings in Norfolk by name Weston Longville – worth it is said 300. Per Annum". That is, of course, just the starting point. Woodforde's income at its peak falls under four headings: tithes form the great bulk and it is to this that the £300 refers; in addition there were fees for marriages, burials, christenings etc; the income from his estates in Castle Cary and Sandford Orcas; and, finally, his sales of farm produce. In later years the fees dwindled, most of them presumably going to his curates. On the other hand, the extreme inflation of crops in the late 1790s skewed that aspect of his income considerably, especially the price of wheat, which famously soared. It is interesting to see him sympathising with the poor about the price of bread and yet receiving record sums for his own wheat.

Tithes. The Tithe Audit Day seems to have achieved on average around £260 but extra portions subsequently dribbled in. Mr Custance's tithe was £13.12.6 and was paid separately, as were those of Peachman (£14.8.0), Pegg (£10.16.0) and the occasional woman who did not attend the Audit frolic. It has been remarked by Roy Winstanley that Woodforde was unusual in that he did not increase his tithes during the inflationary period at the end of the century, as his successor did as soon as he took over. I feel that it would be reasonable to suggest that the £300 figure originally put on them was in fact usually achieved, and perhaps a little more.

Fees. In 1785/6 he received around £7.3.6 in church fees, although this was a fairly light year for him. The total included five guineas for burying a Custance child and he received that amount for christening each of the Custance children in the earlier years. He usually returned the sixpence charged for churching women. Otherwise the main fees covered marriages and burials. They more or less fade out when the curates take over.

Rents. The Sandford Orcas estate was let for four guineas per annum rising to five in 1795, but this was all absorbed by money spent upon it by the tenants around this period. One feels that he did achieve an improved estate by this arrangement but his heirs rather than the Parson himself were the beneficiaries. In earlier years, when he lived around Castle Cary, he did receive a few pounds in rent very occasionally, but never anything significant, although Winstanley writes that the original rents handled by his father helped towards his education in early years. His final visit there with his nephew William in 1795 was unproductive.

Much more to the point was the property left him by his mother and split with Jane and John. In his absence Mr Pounsett managed his Ansford money for him and there is a crucial entry in June 1782 when there was an accounting for two years' rents totalling £135 before various deductions. After Pounsett's death, Jane sent him various small sums of money but it is difficult to quantify these. There seems to have been some slight increase in rents and as a working hypothesis one might take his income from that source at £70 per annum.

Farm Income. Some of this would, of course, be directly offset by the costs of his farming, but it was nonetheless income and would nowadays be counted as such. In 1785/6 the sales of hay and barley amounted to £33.2.8 but by 1799 his receipts from hay, wheat and barley had jumped to £118.16.0, which more than offset his loss of fees. In addition he sold meat, calves and pigs to the tune of £12.7.2. The matter of butter is complicated, unless I have missed something. In the earlier years he paid Betty Dade for butter, whereas later he was given some quite significant money she had received for butter, to the tune of perhaps £20 per annum. One feels there must have been some new arrangement come to at some stage. His losses at cards were modest and he was not lucky enough to achieve real winnings. Presumably they would not be counted as part of his income anyway.

Overall, it is not unreasonable to suppose that in the late 1780s the Parson's income may have been around £450 in all, rising to £500 or so at the turn of the century. On 19 April 1799 he was self-assessed for tax on his income, for which he was liable, according to the notes to that volume, to pay 10 per cent. He actually assessed himself at £20, which was a considerable under-estimate, as Winstanley pointed out in his small 1984 leaflet on *Woodforde and the Tax System*. Winstanley does comment that Woodforde was fiddling his taxes, but he misjudges the amount, saying that "we may safely assume that his total income from all sources in the last years of the eighteenth century was not far short of £350 a year." In fact, it may well have been getting on for £500 a year, on which he should have paid £50 in tax. Given his various sources of income and the times in which he lived, he was unlikely to get caught. It is true, as Winstanley points out, that around this time he ceased to write down the Tithe totals in his diary, but I tend to think that this was due to age rather than outright dishonesty. He was, from the evidence of the Diary, an honest man in his dealings with tradesmen, relations and workmen. He would not have been the first or the last to class the tax people differently.

We should not leave him without reflecting on what this income actually means. As Winstanley mentions, Weston Longville yielded more than Ansford and Castle Cary combined. If one refers ot the website MeasuringWorth.com (as one must while quoting these figures), the sum of £500 in 1790 was in 2006 worth £44,799.46 in modern terms. The average stipend in the Chichester diocese in 2006 was just under £22,000. This is not an absolute comparison, since there are various perks applicable at both ends, but it would appear that the Church of England produced a better living in 1790 than it does today. It is also interesting that, on the same conversion, the five guineas bestowed by the Parson upon various of his relations upon parting from them now equates to £470 in spending power. Likewise, the £700 first given and then retrieved by Samuel Woodforde for his son John's partnership in Bristol was in 1760 worth £94,540 in modern terms.

James Woodforde lived up to his income and, it has been remarked, might have been in some straits had he lived much longer, but in eighteenth century terms we are dealing with a quite affluent family.

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.

Website:
www.parsonwoodforde.org.uk

The Parson Woodforde Society is a registered charity no. 1010807

FWB PRINTING WINCANTON SOMERSET BA9 9EB 01963 33755