PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

Quarterly Journal

ANNA LETITIA BARBAULD (NÉE AIKIN)
BY SIR EMERY WALKER, AFTER HENRY HOPPNER MEYER
PHOTOGRAVURE, circa 1907 (National Portrait Gallery, London)

VOL. XLI NO. 3 AUTUMN 2008

Mr Townshend's Game-keeper John Hutchins
brought me a Spaniel-Bitch-Puppey about
five weeks old, a bright brown curled Puppey –
Gave John for his trouble – 0 : 2 : 6
(*Diary*, 7 December 1791)

There was a spaniel on board the *Mayflower.* This little dog, once, was chased by wolves not far from the plantation and ran to crouch between its master's legs 'for succour'. Smart dog – it knew that muskets are sharper than teeth. What I find remarkable about this animal is that I should know of its existence at all, that its unimportant passage through time should be recorded. It becomes one of those vital inessentials that convince one that history is true.

(Penelope Lively, *Moon Tiger*, 1988)

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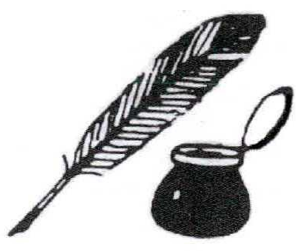


EDITORIAL

I write this on the day following our return from the Norwich Frolic. Of that event, however, I shall say little as the Report and other matters related to the weekend-end – the after-dinner Address, the Sermon and the Quiz – will appear, as a shaft of September sunshine, in the Winter Journal. Nevertheless I have to confess to a feeling of relief that yet again Ann Williams (ably aided by her assistant, David) has, as it were, conjured the sausages from the sleeve of the Norfolk jacket. People get degrees in Events Organisation these days. Ann deserves a doctorate.

I have also been thinking about something said by Selwyn Tillett at the service on Sunday morning: the Weston harvest was not yet home. If a note of uncertainty crept into our harvest festival hymns I hope we will be forgiven. It prompts thoughts about the concerns which wet summers and late harvests must have aroused among the villagers two hundred years ago. A quick glance through the pages of the Diary unsurprisingly reveals considerable variation in the date by which the harvest was complete. In 1778 'all my Barley abt. 3 Roods [was] all cut by 10 o'clock' on the morning of 21 August. In 1785 the harvest was not finished until 14 September. On 5 September 1787 Woodforde records 'Precarious Weather for the Harvest still continues' but five days later there was 'Very fine Weather (thank God) for the Harvest now'; so the parson must have set off for his north Norfolk tour the next day with a much lighter heart and on 12 September he had a

> Very pleasant ride from Wells to Burnham all by
> the Sea and by Holkham House, Mr Cokes –

our destination on Saturday.

Weather must also have been on the mind of our visiting preacher Pastor Keith Grogg and his wife Vivian. They came from the Atlantic seaboard of North Carolina and with every sign of this being an especially active hurricane season, they were naturally concerned for their family, friends and church back home. The idea that a 'rank Presbyterian' should ever preach in his church would probably have surprised James Woodforde but he would surely have been delighted by this gifted, sincere and good-humoured couple. It was a great pleasure to meet such lovely people and we thank Selwyn and Cassie for entertaining them on our behalf.

Particular mention was made at the AGM of the work of Carole Child who in recent years has done so much valuable research into the lives – or, perhaps, the 'afterlives' – of Diary characters once they had passed from Woodforde's pages. She has brought us much more information on personalities as diverse as Betsy Davie, Roger Hall, Ben Leggett and James Nosworthy and now she sheds more light on that 'sweet tempered Girl' – or 'mere Jilt' – Betsy White.

Congratulations to our member and Journal contributor, Michael Stone, whose magnificent edition of *The Diary of John Longe, Vicar of Coddenham* has now been published by the Suffolk Records Society. That Society is also to be commended on the exceptionally high standard of printing and presentation. You can read more of this fine addition to the list of published clerical diaries in Professor Wilson's review.

You will read in the Newsletter that your Committee has reluctantly decided to increase the subscription for the first time since 1996. We apologise for this especially at a time when prices generally are increasing. The significant increase in postage and printing costs, however, mean that we cannot continue to produce and circulate a quarterly journal and newsletter for less than £16 per member per year without dipping into those funds which we wish to reserve for contingencies. Who knows when a painting of Nancy may appear on the market or that of James require cleaning or conservation? Please let your bank have your revised standing order instructions as requested in the Newsletter.

MARTIN BRAYNE

WHAT HAPPENED TO BETSY WHITE?

Elizabeth (Betsy) White was the only surviving child of James White (known as Lawyer White in the diary) and his wife Mary Hole and was baptised in the parish church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul at Shepton Mallet on 26 February 1755. The parish register noted that she was 15 weeks old at the time of her baptism, which gives her a birth date of sometime in early November 1754. Two other baptisms of children to a James and Mary White are recorded – Ann in 1745 and John in 1747 – but there are several couples with the surname White included in the registers and it is difficult to sort out exactly who was who, and if they were Betsy's older siblings neither of them survived.

James Woodforde had probably known Betsy all her life and she first appears in the diary in June 1762 at the age of seven when he was aged 22. Her uncle Robert White was married to Woodforde's elder sister Mary and I rather imagine, given the difference in their ages that, on the rare occasions when they met, Betsy viewed James Woodforde more as a kind of uncle than a possible husband. However infrequent their meetings over the years his opinion of her grew until he wrote in his diary:

> She is a sweet tempered Girl indeed and I like her much,
> and I think would make a good Wife, I do not know but
> I shall make a bold stroke that way –
>
> (25/09/1771)

Being the most cautious of men it took nearly three more years before he felt ready to make his bold stroke. Betsy was staying with the Ansford Whites and after dinner he walked her back to their house and recorded:

> I went home with Betsy White & had some talk with her
> concerning my making her mine when an Opportunity
> offered, and she was not averse to it at all
>
> (28/05/1774)

If it was a serious proposal he soon seems to have got cold feet, as there is no evidence that he made any great attempt to see her again or contact her in any way. The next time she is mentioned in the diary is some five months later on 27 September when he rode to Shepton to see her but 'she and her father are gone to Bristol today'.

Then another four months elapsed before her name appears again:

> I called on M^{r} White's at Shepton but Betsy White
> was not at home, she being in Devonshire at M^{r}
> Troits & is to remain there till Easter – was told –
> (28/01/1775)

He had just accepted the living on Weston Longville and perhaps now the opportunity *had* offered itself was planning to make a more formal proposal, but the fact that the news that Betsy was spending the winter in Devonshire came as a surprise to him suggests that he had had no contact with her or heard anything about her in all that time.

There then followed an even longer gap in the diary without her name being mentioned until news of her impending marriage came to him from his niece Jenny Clarke, who had been with Betsy on her Devonshire visit. It was casually sandwiched in the day's diary entry between recording dinner at James Clarke's house where, not for the first time, his brother John's drunken behaviour had upset him, and the writing of a letter to a Mr Langdon concerning Winchester College business:

> Betsy White of Shepton is to be married in a fortnight
> to a Gentleman of Devonshire by name Webster a
> Man reported to have 500 p^{d} per Annum 18000.
> in the Stocks besides Expectations from his Father.
> He had settled 300 p^{d} per Annum on Betsy
> (10/08/1775)

She could have simply been a casual acquaintance rather than the girl he hoped to marry.

The last time he was to see her was shortly after her marriage when the Websters visited the White family in Ansford. James Woodforde having spent the day trying to avoid seeing them was unfortunate enough to meet the couple on the turnpike in the evening. Betsy was friendly towards him, but he was embarrassed by the situation and, I think, clearly hoped that she had forgotten his half-hearted proposal to her. His memorable remark that 'she had proved herself to me a mere Jilt' (16/09/1775) was written to make himself feel better about the whole situation.

And did Betsy behave badly to him? I don't believe she even realised she had been proposed to and would have remembered nothing more than a walk home on a pleasant spring evening after a good meal and some cheerful conversation. Perhaps he said something along the lines of "If I was in a position to marry – would you marry me?" and she might have thought that he really was a very nice person and quite different from his brothers, may have laughed and said "yes of course I would" and thought no more about it. She already had a wide social circle of friends and as the only child of a successful country attorney and with money on her mother's side of the family, her marriage prospects would be set a good deal higher than anything a poor curate, especially one who at that time was a poor unemployed curate, might be able to offer.

Anyway, what did happen to Betsy White after her marriage to Charles Webster? And who, exactly, was this wealthy husband from Devonshire with his £500 per annum, £18,000 in stocks plus 'expectations from his father'?

The Webster Family

In fact the Webster family had no connection with the West Country having originally come from Derbyshire. The family's fortunes had been founded by Sir Godfrey Webster (c. 1648-1720) and his son Sir Thomas Webster (1676-1751). Sir Godfrey, who was a merchant with interests in shipping, had loaned money to William III and in return the family secured contracts with the Government to supply clothing to the Army and hemp to the Navy. Advantageous marriages had further increased the family's wealth and in 1701 Sir Thomas married Jane Cheeke who was the heiress to the fortunes of both her father and grandfather, Henry Whistler. Their children were Whistler (1709-1779), Godfrey (d. 1780), Abigail (1706-1777), Jane (1707-1772), whose marriage to the Rev Robert Bluett was to provide the family's connection with Devon, and Elizabeth (1713-1760), who was to become Charles Webster's mother.

Like many other self-made men who had made their money in trade Sir Thomas decided to sell off the family's widespread property and investment interests which had centred on London and Essex and instead consolidate his assets by buying up tracts of land and property in the Weald of East Sussex in an attempt to join the landed gentry. He spent some £96,000 over 12 years on furthering his aims, along the way buying Bodiam Castle and the 8,000 acre estate of Battle Abbey which was to be the family's principal seat for the next 200 years. During this time their wealth and lands would gradually diminish until next to nothing was left. This was due in part to it being heavily encumbered by marriage portions and bequests but also due to the extravagant and wild behaviour of succeeding generations, the most notorious of the family being Sir Godrey (1749-1800) the fourth baronet and first cousin of Betsy's husband Charles Webster. His marriage to Elizabeth Vassall was tempestuous and unhappy and led to the couple's divorce in 1797 after she had eloped with Henry Richard Fox, Lord Holland. Sir Godfrey then proceeded to gamble away what remained of the fortune Elizabeth had brought to the marriage and after attempting suicide twice by taking poison he eventually succeeded in killing himself by putting a pistol to his head.

Elizabeth Webster, rather confusingly, married a man called Edward Webster but very little is known of his background. The Rev William Betham wrote in 1802 that he was 'an officer of the army, bearing the same arms but not acknowledged by her family as a relation, being a stolen match'.[1] Elopement or not, some £9,000 was settled on Elizabeth by her family and the couple married on 7 May 1750 at St Martin in the Fields, their only child, Charles, being born on 6 March of the following year.

Elizabeth Webster died in 1762 and her will[2] exclusively concerns her still unpaid marriage portion and the ever-increasing sum of interest due on it. Edward Webster remains a shadowy figure. He lived on until 1784[3] but seems to have played little part in his son's affairs, excepting that during his lifetime his name appears on a succession of legal documents made in the hope of obtaining the money due to his son. Unfortunately the main trustee of the money was Elizabeth's brother Sir Godrey who needed the money himself. In 1808, some twenty years after his death, there was still a case going through the Courts of Chancery in which his creditors were pursuing their claims against his estate. Things got no better after his death as trusteeship was taken over by his gambler son Sir Godfrey which simply meant that there was even less chance of any money being recovered for Charles Webster. All attempts to retrieve the money appear to have failed as it was still unpaid, several generations later, in the early nineteenth century.

Young Charles had the benefits of an education at Eton and St John's College, Cambridge and was a member of Lincoln's Inn, but he was not quite as wealthy as the rumours in Somerset had suggested. The cash part of his expected inheritance was never paid to him and neither of his parents had any property to leave him. His father's main beneficiary appears to have been his servant Thomas Hart, to whom he left everything in his lodgings, 200 guineas and £20 for mourning. Although it mattered little, as by the time of his father's death Charles was enjoying the life of a landed gentleman at his estate at Hockworthy Manor in Devon, an inheritance that was entirely due to a legacy from his aunt Jane Bluett, his mother's sister.

The Bluett Family

The Bluetts were a very old Devonshire family. They acquired the manor of Holcombe Rogus, some five miles west of Wellington, in the fifteenth century and built a fine Tudor house there which remains to this day little changed standing next to the parish church which is filled with some very fine monuments to the family.

Jane Webster's very brief marriage to the Revd Robert Bluett produced one child, John Edward Robert Bluett, who was born in 1749, the same year in which his father died. Jane, her son's sole guardian, continued to live at Holcombe Court until his early death at the age of 17 in 1766, at which point the estate passed to the Revd Bluett's younger brother Buckland Nutcombe Bluett. With her only child's death, Jane's focus in life turned to her nephew Charles Webster. He was much the same age as her own son, another only child and motherless since 1763. He became her main heir and it was for him that she purchased the neighbouring manor of Hockworthy which he took possession of after her death in 1772.

The winter and spring of 1774/1775 saw a house party at Huntsham in Devon, the home of William Troyte ('Mr Troit' of the Diary). A Miss Troit had been a visitor to the White's home in Shepton Mallet in 1772 and it is possible that the families knew each other through the Martin family of East Pennard who were related to Mrs White's family, the Holes. It would have been natural for the Troytes to also invite their new neighbour Charles Webster to their home and if Betsy was as attractive and sweet-tempered as Woodforde seems to have thought, it would also be natural that Charles Webster would be attracted to her. On paper, at least, it was a brilliant match for Betsy and they were married at Shepton Mallet on 5 September 1775.

After The Marriage

Charles and Betsy's first child Jane, named for Jane Bluett, was baptised on 8 November 1776 at Uplowman in Devon; it is most likely that she died as a baby as her name does not appear in later records. She was followed by Edward in 1778, Charles in 1779, Elizabeth in 1781 and James in 1783, but there Betsy's story ends – with her early death. Perhaps she had complications during a sixth pregnancy, or she was suffering from consumption as so many did at the time, as she was buried in the churchyard at Pilton, a couple of miles south west of Shepton Mallet on 22 September 1784. She was not yet thirty years of age.

Did any of his relatives think to tell James Woodforde the news? Nancy received a letter from her sister Juliana on 23 October but he failed to record any of its contents. A week later they received another letter, one with a large black seal which 'very much alarmed self and Nancy'. It was from Heighes telling them of the death of Robert White (James's brother-in-law and Betsy's uncle) on 19 October. It seems strange that no-one mentioned Betsy's death, but perhaps they did and James Woodforde simply didn't record the news in his diary. A man with a very unforgiving nature when it came to people who had offended or slighted him in any way, perhaps he still thought of Betsy as a 'mere Jilt' and for that reason decided not to mention her death – still it seems unbelievable that the news did not reach Norfolk.

Charles Webster lived only another six years himself. His burial on 18 March 1791 took place at Hockworthy and left the four remaining children orphans, the youngest James not yet eight. Betsy's parents James and Mary White, along with Mary's sister

Philly Hole, at the age of 65 the youngest of the three, were left to pick up the pieces.

The first thing mentioned in Charles Webster's will,[4] written a year after Betsy's death, was the money still due to him from his cousin Sir Godfrey Webster, which appears to have been promised to the eldest son (Edward) when Betsy and Charles's marriage settlement had been draw up. The property at Hockworthy was divided between the two other sons and Elizabeth was promised a '£600 bond due to me from her grandfather James White' and also Charles's share and rents of the manor of Sal in (what is now) Northern Ireland which he had inherited from his Whistler ancestors. In addition the three younger children were each to receive £600.

The will was followed by two codicils, each made after the birth of sons, Samuel and John, to a 'Sarah Toze of the parish of Hockworthy single woman'. These made provision for an annuity of £15 for her and set aside a capital sum of £100 to be invested to provide apprenticeships for two boys, all the money to pay for this to come out of the inheritance due to Webster's second son, Charles. Philly Hole swore that the second, undated, codicil was in the hand of Charles Webster and guardianship of the Webster children was granted to the Whites, but after James White's death in 1792 and his wife's two years later (both were buried at Pilton), responsibility for the Webster children fell entirely on to the Hole family.

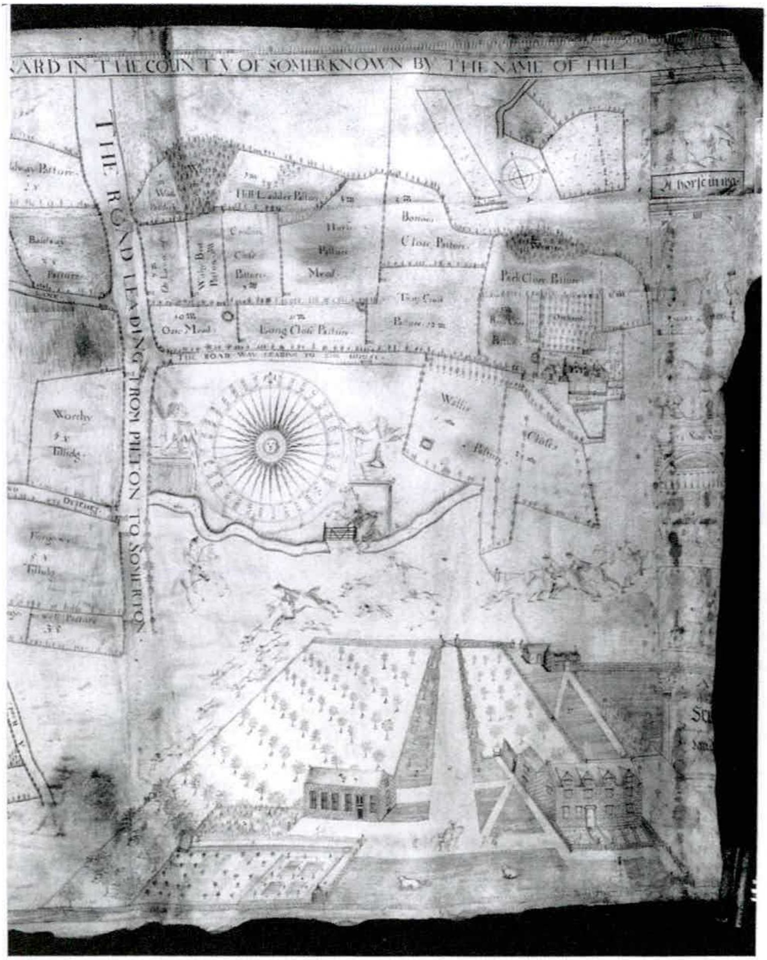
The Hole Family

The Hole family had lived and farmed at Pilton since at least the reign of Charles I, and the initials I.H. with the date 1629 are carved into the stone doorway of Pilton House which stands in Lower Street in the heart of the village. Marriages with the Jeanes family of East Pennard increased their landholdings and also introduced the name Phillipa and its eventual diminution to Philly into the family. An estate map of 1728,[5] which was sold at Christies in 1991, shows that the family's main lands were situated between West and East Pennard and centred on Pennard Hill Farm (which had been a Jeanes property). In one corner it includes a drawing of Pilton House with its outbuildings, gardens and orchards and the borders of the map are decorated with hunting scenes and other horse-themed illustrations (see next page).

Mary and Philly (it was the name she was baptised with at Pilton in 1726, although Woodforde always spelt it 'Phylly') were two of the children of Robert and Edith Hole. He was a draper and haberdasher in Shepton Mallet. It is unfortunate that the name Philly Hole has an amusing sound to it, as I think it caused Roy Winstanley to think that James Woodforde was treating her in a rather belittling fashion by calling her that when as the second daughter of the family, he was simply calling her by her correct name. He also assumed that as a spinster she had to run a small shop in order to make ends meet, while it now looks as if she was simply continuing to run her father's long-established business. What does seem slightly strange is why it was her and not her brother William who was running the shop. William, who appears a few times in the Diary, usually in his sister's company, seems to have had no particular occupation other than that of 'gentleman' and like Philly never married.

When William died at the age of 56 in 1785 and was buried in the churchyard at Pilton, the life interest in his property at Westholm in Pilton and West Pennard Farm was left to Philly and after her death to George, Philly and Christian, the children of their other brother John Hole (none of whom feature in the Diary). Christian was the last member of the Hole family to marry, and through her marriage to John Bethel in 1787 ownership of the property eventually passed from the Hole family to the Bethel family, in whose hands it remained until Pilton House was sold in 1980.

With the rents from all the property Philly must have been quite comfortably off. After her death at Pilton on 12 August 1807 at the age of 82 her Estate Duty was valued at £5,000 while, in comparison, James Woodforde's estate was valued at 'under £600'. She had outlived all but two of Betsy's children. Elizabeth was buried at Pilton on 9 January 1797 aged 15 and on 24 September 1799 the *Oracle and General Advertiser* reported the death on 'the 8th inst. At Taunton. Edward Webster Esq. eldest son of the late Charles Webster of Hockworthy Devon and a Lieutenant in the Somerset Fencibles'. Only 21 years of age, he was buried with his father at Hockworthy. Philly's main legatees were the two remaining sons, Charles and James Webster.



Extract from 'A map of the land and inheritance of William Hole gent' by Thomas England (T\PH\sro/62 Somerset Record Office) – Pilton House can be seen in bottom right-hand corner.

Charles and James Webster

Betsy's son Charles Webster married Adria West of Meare in 1809 and the couple lived in Hockworthy. Three of their children, Elizabeth, Charles and Godrey, survived to adulthood and all married and had families, and through them it is quite likely that Betsy White's descendants are alive today. Betsy's son Charles died at the age of 50 in 1830 and Adria his wife four years later at the age of 44. At the end of the 1830s some 760 acres of the estate were sold off at auction and in the succeeding years more was sold and the family eventually drifted away from the area, some to very far-flung corners of the globe. In 1870 the Alexander Colony of European settlers was established in Rosario, Argentina under a general manager, Charles Henry Webster, Betsy's great-grandson. The 1895 Argentine census records the family under their Spanish names – Carlos, Juana and son Cecilio, who had been born in the colony in 1879 and baptised Cecil Godfrey Vassall Webster.

Betsy's other surviving son James married his second cousin Elizabeth White in Ansford on 9 October 1810. She was the daughter of Robert White and Sophy Clarke, Woodforde's nephew and niece, whose match seems to have been frowned upon by the Clarke family not because they were so closely related but because they thought Robert White 'too much the Clown' and appear to have thought him not good enough for their daughter, although the couple were to prove them wrong by their long and happy marriage. In contrast, Elizabeth's marriage to James Webster was to be cut very short by his death after only three years (he was buried at Ansford). Their only child, Elizabeth Sophia Webster, died at the age of 12 in 1823, by which time Elizabeth had remarried.

Her second husband was William Davis Bayly, a barrister from Frome Selwood who practised at the Inner Temple in London, and they had another daughter, Mary Webster Bayly, who he repeatedly and touchingly referred to as 'my lovely' and 'dearest child' in his Will.[6] Something of a social reformer, he published a treatise in 1820 suggesting improvements in the living condition of the poor by arguing against the Speenhamland system of poor relief by which the rate payers subsidised the wages of the poor by topping their low pay up to a supposedly liveable level. However, this effectively just meant that the employers could get away with paying very low wages to their workers knowing that someone else would have to make up the difference, even if this put a huge burden onto the local rate payers at a time of general depression. His solution, which he shared with others, was that cheap subsidised plots of land should be rented out to the poor to enable them to support themselves – in effect a reversal of the Enclosures Acts; however, this was never going to happen as it was fiercely opposed by landowners unwilling to part with their land especially if it would be for less than its market value.

Tragically, history repeated itself almost exactly as William Davis Bayly died at the age of 31 in 1827 and their only, much beloved, child Mary died at the age of 12 in 1832. Eventually in 1839 Elizabeth married for a third time. He was John Hayne, a farmer from Fordington near Dorchester in Dorset, and this time her husband outlived her. She died in 1864 and was re-united with her two daughters and both previous husbands when she joined them in the churchyard at Ansford.

It is always tempting to ask what would have happened if James Woodforde had married Betsy White and they had both moved to Norfolk. Would they have been happy? I rather think that if he had been happily married he would have been less inclined to record in a diary the simply daily goings-on of his life, day after day, month after month and year after year, and we would have lost a wonderful insight into a long-departed world. Perhaps it was just as well that Betsy did marry Charles Webster.

REFERENCES

1. The Rev William Betham, *The Baronetage of England*, 1802.
2. Will of Elizabeth Webster wife of Gt Marlborough Street Westminster PCC 1763 PROB 11/888.
3. Will of Edward Webster of St Ann Westminster PCC 1784 PROB 11/30.
4. Will of Charles Webster of Hockworthy Devon PCC 1791 PROB 11/1206.
5. Photographic copy of *A map of the land and inheritance of William Hole gent* by Thomas England 1728 T\PH\sro/62 Somerset Record Office.
6. Will of William Davis Bayly Barrister of Law of Inner Temple PCC 1828 PROB 11/1737.

With thanks to Phyllis Stanley for all her information on the village of Pilton.

NEWS FROM PILTON

At the end of May 1782 James and Nancy set off on one of their visits back to Somerset, and after a short stay in London at the Bell Savage inn where he was 'bit terribly by the Buggs' they arrived at Cole on 1 June and based themselves for the summer at the Pounsett's home. In the middle of the month there was a mini heatwave and as happens in a typical English summer, three very hot and sultry days were brought to an end by an extremely violent thunderstorm on the morning of the 18th June. 'Thank God no Damage was done by it at Cole, and I hope no where else, either by Land or Water' he wrote in his diary before setting off to Ansford where several members of the family were due to dine at James Clarke's house. Sadly he was to be proved wrong, as later on that day he added:

> We heard at Ansford that there were 3 men struck
> down in Pilton Church by Lightning this morning –
> one of them killed instantly, but the others are like to recover.
> The Man that was Struck dead was tolling a bell for
> A Person lately dead, the other two were near him –
> Pray God have Mercy upon the poor Man

Newspapers, then as now, always liked to pick upon a sensational story and on Tuesday 27 June *The London Chronicle* reported on the storms in the West Country in which a lightning strike had caused a great deal of damage to the church at Thornbury in Gloucestershire, and continued:

> We also hear from Pilton near Wells, that the church was very much injured on Tuesday last by the same storm, which entered the tower, and killed a poor man who was tolling the bell; his cloaths were set on fire, and his shoes burnt on his feet. Two other men were knocked down, but happily recovered. The tower has sustained 200l. damage. Two oxen in a field adjoining were killed at the same time.

The story was repeated verbatim the next day in *The Public Advertiser*, but what neither papers nor James had recorded (if he knew it) was the true tragedy of the incident which was only revealed in the pages of Pilton's parish register:

> June The Eighteenth In Ye Year One Thousand Seven Hundred

And Eighty Two The Top Part Of The Spire Of This Tower And Destroyed By Lightning. The Weathercock In Part Melted And Ye Lightning Being Conducted By The Spill Of The Cock Into The Clock. Cock Melted Some Of The Wires Belonging To The Clock. From Thence Descended To The Belfry And Killed William PIKE A Young Man Then Tolling The Knell For The Burial Of Mrs Mary HOPKINS Wife Of The Rev Mr HOPKINS Vicar Of This Parish. Audivi Vidi Tromui.*

It was only some twenty years since the first lightning conductor had been seen in England (on the Eddystone lighthouse) and church towers usually being the tallest buildings in the landscape were particularly vulnerable to lightning strikes – a fact that would have been well known to people in the eighteenth century. Presumably once William Pyke had begun to toll the bell it would have been considered disrespectful for him to stop and leave the tower, even if it would have been the safest thing for him to do.

The news had travelled quickly to Ansford and would have been the major topic of discussion in the area for some time. Doubtless there would also have been speculative gossip among some people as many would still have viewed a lightning strike on the church as a direct message from God. The fact that the bell was being tolled for the Vicar's wife would only have served to make the event even more sensational in their eyes.

William Pyke was buried at Pilton the day following his death. James Woodforde had met the Rev. Henry Hopkins but had probably long forgotten him. He had served as curate for the aged Mr Hite at Babcary before Woodforde assumed the role in 1764. There had been some dispute between them over the payment for the curacy but that had been easily settled and Woodforde made the following comment about him:

I never saw so bold a Man as
M^{r} Hopkins is, and very droll he is –
I thought I must have burst my Sides by
Laughing in hearing him talk

(14/06/1764)

The Rev Hopkins continued to serve the parish of Pilton until his death in 1804, and as the resident clergyman it was probably he who conducted the funeral service of Woodforde's 'dear Maid of

Shepton', Betsy Webster née White, when she was buried there on 22 September 1784.

NOTE

*Many thanks to Caroline Hannan who is transcribing the Pilton parish registers.

ANNA LÆTITIA BARBAULD AND PALGRAVE SCHOOL

Whether treating them to strawberries and cream or allowing them the run of his garden, in which the Ship in 'my Bason' was a particular attraction, Parson Woodforde was always happy to indulge the young sons of Squire and Mrs Custance. The three eldest boys – Hambleton, George and William – he saw grow into young men, on one occasion actually recording their progress:

> Master George Custance with his Brother Will^{m}
> made us a Morning Visit – stayed about ½ Hour –
> I took the height of each of them, George was
> Four foot 6. Inches – Will^{m} four foot 1. Inch –
> (*Diary*, 18 Feb. 1789)

The diarist also recorded the boys' comings and goings to and from their first school which was at Palgrave; initially described in the Diary as 'a Place near Scole', it is hardly more than a mile south of the centre of Diss but across the county boundary in Suffolk.

Woodforde, usually full of admiration for Mrs Custance, was less than understanding on the day when her eldest son, the 7-year old Hambleton, went away for the first time. Nancy, Bill and the Parson had been visiting Mr and Mrs Jeanes and Mrs Jeanes's aunt Miss Short, who were in lodgings in Norwich and returning to the King's Head they ran into the Custances who were *en route* for Palgrave:

> Mrs Jeanes, Miss Short & my Niece paid their respects to Mrs Custance at the King's Head this morning, but Mrs Custance did not receive them with that openness and Affability that I could wish, being rather hurried and fluttered on her eldest Son going to School –
> Mrs Jeanes however could not help taking notice of it –
>
> (*Diary*, 9 May 1786)

In due course Hambleton was to be followed to Palgrave by his brothers George, like Hambleton (b. 1779) and William (b. 1781). Of the younger surviving sons, John (b. 1787) and Neville (b. 1790) the Diary contains no reference to their schooling.

The school was an interesting and, in many respects, surprising choice. It occupied a large site on the west side of the Green and was a two-storey double roofed house with a large central entrance set in a 70 ft long frontage, apparently dating back to the late sixteenth century when one Symon More was the 'scolemaster'.[1] At some time in the seventeenth century it had ceased to be a school and became a private dwelling which from 1723 until his death in 1771 was the home of the antiquary and historian of Thetford Thomas Martin, a friend of Francis Blomefield and Sir John Fenn.

It was following Martin's death that Palgrave School was re-established – on 25 July 1774 – by the Revd Rochemont Barbauld who had been invited to take charge of a small Dissenting Congregation in the village, which he combined with the management of a boarding school for boys.[2] Barbauld, whose grandfather was a Huguenot who had fled France following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, was the son of an Anglican clergyman who had, however, sent the young Rochemont to the famous Dissenting Academy at Warrington. There he had met Anna Lætitia Aikin, the daughter of the one of the teachers, who he married shortly after taking up the Palgrave post. It was Anna Lætitia who was to bring fame to both the Barbauld name and the school.

Anna Aikin had been something of a prodigy. Her mother had taught her to read before her third birthday and soon after she persuaded her father to give her tuition in Latin.[3] By the time she reached her teens she was already writing poetry which displayed a remarkable degree of maturity. Her poetic themes varied from the

Duke of Bridgewater's recently built canal to politics and animal welfare while 'in style her poems range from burlesque (*The Groans of a Tankard*) to sublime (*A Summer Evening's Meditation*).'[4] In 1773, the year before she married Barbauld, the publication of her Poems proved hugely popular and quickly ran to a fifth edition. Even Dr Johnson approved. Quizzed by Boswell on Dr Blair's use of 'the Johnsonian style', the Great Cham declared, 'Sir, these are not the words I should have used. No, Sir; the imitators of my style have not hit it. Miss Aikin has done it best; for she has imitated the sentiment as well as the diction'.[5] On the subject of her new profession, as assistant to her husband, however, Johnson was a good deal less complimentary:

> Too much is expected from precocity, and too little performed. Miss Aikin was an instance of early cultivation, but in what did it terminate? In marrying a little Presbyterian parson, who keeps an infant boarding-school, so that all her employment now is –
>
> "To suckle fools and chronicle small beer."[6]

Such, however, was by no means the general opinion and the school, which started with just eight pupils, rapidly created for itself a reputation which attracted not only the sons of noblemen but also children from as far away as New York and the West Indies[7] while, in her niece's words, 'the solicitousness of parents anxious to obtain for their sons what they regarded as the best tuition … induced her to receive as her own peculiar pupils several little boys.'[8]

The Barbaulds must have been greatly encouraged by the fact that two of the original pupils proved to be children of exceptional ability. William Taylor of Norwich was, as a young man, to travel abroad, be introduced to Goethe and become an eminent Germanist and the author of, among much else, *English Synonyms Described* and, his *magnum opus*, the *Historic Survey of German Poetry*. He referred to Mrs Barbauld as 'the mother of my mind'.[9] His friend, Frank Sayers, also from Norwich, trained as a doctor but abandoned medicine for literature and his works include *Dramatic Sketches of Norse Mythology*. Sayers especially valued the instruction he had received from Mrs Barbauld in English composition and, in her memoir, Lucy Aikin provides details of the method employed:

> On Wednesdays and Saturdays the boys were called in separate

> classes to her appartment; she read a fable, or a moral essay, to them aloud, and then sent them back to the schoolroom to write it out on the slates in their own words. Each exercise was separately overlooked by her; the faults of grammar were obliterated; the vulgarisms were chastised, the idle epithets were cancelled, and a distinct reason was always assigned for every correction.

At a time when Education was virtually synonymous with classical education, the Barbaulds provided what would become known as a liberal education, of the kind that had been provided at Warrington. As a former Geography teacher, I was especially pleased to read Lucy Aikin's description of her aunt's method of teaching that subject:

> The department of geography was also undertaken by Mrs Barbauld; she relieved the dryness of a study seldom rendered interesting to children, by so many lively strokes of description, and such luminous and attractive views of the connexion of this branch of knowledge with the revolution of empires, with national manners, and with the natural history of animals, that these impressive lectures were always remembered by her auditors less among their tasks than their pleasures.

Clearly, the Barbaulds were by no means content to follow conventional educational practices. Anna wrote a number of books initially intended for the infants at Palgrave, which enjoyed widespread popularity. *Early Lessons for Children* became one of the earliest of standard text-books, as was *Hymns in Prose for Children*, a religious primer. Both books were used in Britain and North America well into the next century.[10]

Another aspect of life at Palgrave which must have been unusual, if not unique, in an eighteen century school was the production of plays to which the local people were invited. Mrs Barbauld herself wrote some of the theatrical pieces for her pupils to perform but there survives in the Norfolk Record Office a playbill advertising the performance of a play written by Horace Walpole's friend the clergyman William Mason.[11] It begins –

By the Young Gentlemen of Palgrave School

On MONDAY, May the 27th 1782, will be presented
A TRAGEDY, called

CARACTACUS

Master Lowndes played the part of the eponymous hero and the play was preceded by a Prologue written by the Rev. S. Westerby. This was Simon Westerby, one of the assistant teachers at the school who was later to become the headmaster of the Guildhall Grammar School, Diss, and Rector of Kenninghall.[12] To the tragedy was 'added a Farce called TASTE' by Samuel Foote which satirised a variety of contemporary fashions such as the elaborate head-dress worn by Lady Pentweazel ('Master Mounsey') from which the feathers fall as the play progresses.

The school also published a 'weekly chronicle', mostly of Anna's composition. One of her didactic contributions was a poem entitled *Written on a Marble*:

The world's something bigger
But just of this figure
And speckled with mountains and seas;
Your heroes are overgrown schoolboys
Who scuffle for empires and toys,
And kick the poor ball as they please.
Now Caesar, now Pompey gives law;
And Pharsalia's plain,
Though heaped with the slain
Was only a game at *taw*.[13]

The progressive sentiments expressed in the verse could not be more radically different from the lessons then being taught 'on the playing fields of Eton'!

The game of marbles also features in another poem *A School Eclogue*, a poetic conversation between three boys – William, Edward and Harry. In seeking to bestow particular praise one of the boys proclaims –

As far as alleys beyond taws we prize
Or venison pasty ranks above school pies;
As much as peaches beyond apples please,
Or Parmesan excels a Suffolk cheese;
Or Palgrave donkeys lag behind a steed –[14]

The same poem also provides some insight into the system of sanctions employed to instil discipline at the school. There are references to 'fines and jobations' and even to 'juvenile trials' which suggests that the pupils themselves played some part in keeping their peers in order. All that we know of the Barbaulds suggests that, unlike the teachers at the public schools, they would have preferred to 'spare the rod' but the *Eclogue* suggests that corporal punishment was not unknown. The poem ends with William issuing this warning:

Cease! Cease your carols, both! For lo the bell,
With jarring notes, has rung out Pleasure's knell.
Your startled comrades, ere the game be done,
Quit their unfinished sports, and trembling run.
Haste to your forms before the master call!
With thoughtful step he paces o'er the hall,
Does with stern looks each playful loiterer greet,
Counts with his eye and marks each vacant seat;
Intense the buzzing murmur grows around,
Loud through the dome the usher's strokes resound.
Sneak off and to your places slyly steal,
Before the prowess of his arm you feel.[15]

The Barbaulds ran the school for eleven years leaving in 1785; as we have seen this was the year before Hambleton Custance's arrival. There survives in the Norfolk Record Office *A List of Mr Barbauld's Pupils 25th March 1785* to which someone has added in pencil 'when Mr Barbauld was about leaving'. At that time the school had 40 pupils ranging in age from 6 ('Dumbleton – son of a Gent. In Surrey, Mr Rich[d] Gurney knows him') to 16 ('Wright – son of the late Town Clerk of Norwich'). Social kudos came in the form of the sons of the Earls of Drogheda and Selkirk and of Lords Templetown and Longford. The Warrington connection is reflected in the presence of the 14 year-old son of Dr Joseph Priestly[16] and of Anna's nephew Arthur Aikin (12). Aikin was to become a Unitarian minister but gave up his ministry to concentrate on science, especially geology and mineralogy. A mineral, Aikinite, was named after him and he became the second president of the Chemical Society. Samuel Coleridge, who met him in Edinburgh, described him, perhaps a little uncharitably, as 'a sullen cold-blooded fellow, but very acute'.[17]

One of Aikin's near contemporaries at Palgrave who also appears in the 1785 list was William (later Sir William) Gell, described, together with his brother, as 'sons of a Gent. of large fortune near

Ashburn, Derbyshire'. William was to become a classicist, travel writer and author of *The Topography of Troy*. In the original draft of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* Byron refers to him in the following couplet:

> Of Dardan towns let dilettanti tell,
> I leave topography to coxcomb Gell.[18]

Having met the topographer of the Troad and, presumably, been charmed by him, the poet replaced 'coxcomb' with 'classic' which is what appears in the earliest published editions of the poem. Later, however, having realised that Gell 'topographized King Priam's dominions in three days!', Byron made a further change and 'classic' was succeeded by 'rapid'.[19] Gell nevertheless did much to awaken interest in classical archaeology and in the emerging study of Egyptology. Furthermore, he was an entertaining dinner companion and in old age another poet, Walter Savage Landor, reflected on how much –

> I miss the tales I used to tell
> with candid Hare and joyous Gell.[20]

Appearing immediately above the Gell brothers on the list of pupils is Isaac Weld, aged 11, the 'son of Mr Weld of Dublin' who, like William Gell, was to become a topographical writer. Having travelled widely in the United States and Canada in 1795-97, his *Travels through ... North America and ... Canada*, the anti-American tone of which he later regretted, was published in 1799. In 1807 he published *Illustrations of the Scenery of Killarney* which did much to attract tourists to that particularly beautiful part of his native island. In 1815 he was one of the passengers on the pioneering voyage of the 14 h.p. steamboat *Thames* from Dun Laoghaire (then Queenstown) to London.[21]

Palgrave School's most famous alumnus, who had arrived at the tender age of three and left shortly before the list was compiled, was Thomas Denman who eventually was to become Lord Denman of Dovedale, Lord Chief Justice. At Eton he was ragged for the liberal views which he was to maintain throughout his life and suggest the early influence of Anna Lætitia. As a young lawyer he eloquently defended the Luddites in 1817 and, three years later, he was part of Queen Caroline's defence team, describing her as 'the most wronged and insulted of women' and, rather injudiciously, comparing her to Nero's wife, Octavia. As an MP he campaigned, as Anna had done, against slavery and the notorious Six Acts and was the drafter of the Great Reform Bill. In old age he was said to be greatly moved by reading Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. There can be little doubt that Mrs Barbauld would have been proud of the career of this the most distinguished of her many successful pupils.

The poor health of Anna's husband caused the Barbaulds to give up the school in 1785 and it was taken over by the Revd Nathaniel Philipps. He is referred to in Woodforde's Diary in the entry for 21 July 1788:

> M^r^ Custance with his 3. Eldest Sons, Hambleton,
> George & William, drank Coffee & Tea with us
> this Afternoon – Hambleton & George go to school
> to Morrow, to M^r^ Philipps at Palgrave.

An advertisement from Philipps's time suggests that he continued to offer the same kind of liberal education which had characterised the Barbauld era:

> PALGRAVE SCHOOL – 30 young gentlemen are educated
> in various branches of Literature upon the following terms –
> Entrance 2 guineas: Tuition and Board 25 gns per ann.
> Under Tuition will be comprehended
> The Latin, Greek and Franch languages, English Grammar
> and Comprehension, Writing, Arithmetic, Book-keeping.
> Geography and the use of the globes will be charged
> separately, as also a Course of lectures in
> Experimental Philosophy which will be delivered if
> required to such pupils as are of proper age.
> N.B. a quarter's notice of removal will be expected.[22]

By 1790 William Custance had joined his older brothers at the school and this suggests that their parents were happy with the education they were receiving. When George had returned home for the Christmas holiday in 1788 he had 'Childblains on one foot' but this can hardly be blamed on the school for there had been a particularly cold spell of weather and on the following day it was 'intensely cold ... very penetrating' and Betsy Davy was 'about lame in both feet by Childblains' and 'Nancy also complained of something similar'.[23] By contrast, when the three boys came home for the summer holiday in 1791 Woodforde, who was again in Norwich, wrote –

> M^{r} & M^{rs} Custance came to the King's Head
> about 11 o'clock this Morning to meet their
> three Sons Hambleton, George and William
> on their return home from Palgrave School
> for their Summer Holidays – I saw M^{r} Custance
> and the three young gentlemen who looked
> Extremely well and exactly as School-Boys should – [23]

It is an entry which brings to mind the opening verses of Anna Barbauld's *School Eclogue*:

> Edward
> Hist, William, Hist! what means that air so gay?
> Thy looks, they dress bespeak some holiday:
> Thy hat is brushed; thy hands with wondrous pains,
> Are cleansed from garden mould and inky stains;
> Thy glossy shoes confess the lacquey's care,
> And recent from the comb shines thy sleek hair.
> What god, what saint this prodigy has wrought?
> Declare the cause and cease my labouring thought!
>
> William
> John, faithful John is with the horses come;
> Mamma prevails and I am sent for home …

* * *

There is a further item concerning Palgrave School in the Norfolk Record Office; a letter dated from 'Diss 6 May 1856', addressed to 'My Dear Isaac' and signed 'P.H. Taylor'. It describes a visit, after many years absence, to Palgrave where the writer had been a contemporary of the older Custance boys. He found 'but little alteration in the village' although a new National School had been built across the Green from his old school, now known as 'Barbauld House', which had become a girls' school kept by a Mrs Hart. He was invited in and was surprised to find that the schoolroom 'seemed to have shrunk wonderfully. It was full of young Ladies to whom I mentioned that I had sat in that school room 68 years before – & then I told them some stories which made them all laugh'.[25] Three years later the old school was pulled down. As for Anna

Lætitia Barbauld herself, she and her husband settled in Stoke Newington, London where she became part of a literary circle which included William Godwin and Maria Edgeworth. Unfortunately, Rochemont, who appears to have been a manic-depressive, became increasingly abusive; they separated and he committed suicide in 1808. Anna herself became prey to both melancholy and asthma. She died on 9 March 1825 and is buried at St Mary's, Stoke Newington.[26] A sad end to a life of real accomplishment.

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NINETEENTH CENTURY ALTON

The town of Alton in East Hampshire has no connection with the Diary, apart from the fact that James Woodforde's grandfather was born at Binsted, about three miles from the centre of Alton and his grandmother lived at Anstey, now very much a part of Alton. However, Alton historian Jane Hurst has recently published a book entitled *A History of Alton – 1800 to 1850*, which although it only overlaps the Diary by two years, contains some snippets of information (not necessarily connected with the Diary), which may be of interest to Woodfordeans, which Mrs Hurst has kindly agreed may be extracted.

The Effects of the French War

In January and February 1800, the price of coal was said to have risen enormously. Bread was 2s 7d per Gallon – almost double the price in 1797. Woodforde commented:

> Febry 25, Tuesday (1800)
> The Price of Wheat being so very dear at present
> occasions very great grumbling amongst the
> Poor at this time, and makes them talk loudly –
> Three Pounds per Coomb for Wheat on Saturday
> last was said to be asked at Norwich Market –
> (*Diary*, Vol. 16)

At the end of January 1801, Woodforde received £3. 15. 0 per coomb. 1 coomb = 4 bushels.

The Weather

On 1 September 1800, there was said to have been a large change of weather with a great deal of rain and the temperature dropping from 85F to 58F in 48 hours. The preceding long drought and continued extreme heat had not been known for a long time.

> August 31, Monday (1801)
> We finished Harvest to day before Dinner, Cut,
> dried and in Barn without any Rain at all -
> Never known finer Weather during any Harvest –
> …… The Weather having been so
> very dry we were obliged to feed our Stock with
> some of our second Crop of Clover –
> (*Diary*, Vol. 17)

1801 Census

10/11 March 1801 was the night appointed for ascertaining the population of England and Wales – the first country-side census. The population of the parish of Alton, which included Anstey (see above) was 2026.

Coach Accidents

In October 1805, the mail coach from London to Southampton was overturned in Alton, caused by running against a crate of goods which had been left in the street. Although the coach was full, no serious injury was sustained by the passengers.

Four years later, the Southampton coach, coming from London through Alton, also overturned. "The inside passengers received little injury, but six of the fourteen outside were materially hurt; a woman and her child each had a leg broke; two female servants, going to get ready a house in the Isle of Wight for the family, were so much bruised as to be incapable of continuing and the butler who went on, we understand, is laid up in Southampton; another man is yet at the Swan, much hurt, tho' no bones broken; but a woman (whose husband is with her) is so crushed by the fall, or by the luggage, that her recovery is doubtful."

So coach travel could be dangerous, even if the average speed was only about seven miles an hour. The London to Southampton coach appears to have been rather larger than the one in which the Parson and Nancy travelled from London to Bath.

> June 28, Friday (1793)
> We got up about 4. o'clock this m orning and at
> 5. got into the Bath Coach from the Angel and
> set off for Bath – Briton on the top of the Coach –
> The Coach carries only 4. inside Passengers – …
> We were very near meeting with an Accident in
> Reading, passing a Waggon – but thank God we got
> by safe and well – It was owing to the Coachman –
> (*Diary*, Vol. 13)

Law and Order

Peter M'Guire was committed to the County Gaol in June 1801 for a highway robbery at Alton. He was capitally convicted but later reprieved. The early 1800s were a time when many burglaries were reported in the area. In order to try to do something about this state of affairs, the local gentlemen and tradesmen formed the *'Alton Association for Preventing Robberies, Thefts and Misdemeanours, Protection of Persons and Property and Prosecuting Offenders'*. All subscribers had to pay a guinea or more and the money was to be used to offer rewards to those giving information on oath – provided it led to a conviction.

> Mar. 24 (1781)
> The four Highwaymen that infested these roads last Winter were all tried at the Assizes held last week at Thetford, found guilty and all condemmed.
>
> (*Diary*, Vol. 9)

The New Windmill

Alton's windmill burnt down in the 1740s. Nothing more is heard of it until the Poor Rate of 1800. Between then and 1803, the rate was charged and then "not used Rate deducted", was added to the entry. The owner was Thomas Dicker, who was at Anstey Farm and Anstey water mill.

In 1690, Mary Woodforde recorded in her diary that arrangements were being made for the marriage of Heighes Woodforde to Mary Lamport (the Parson's paternal grandparents).[1] The Lamports operated Anstey water mill.[2]

Henry Austen's Bank

Jane Austen's brother, Henry, together with his brother Capt. Francis Austen and Henry Maunde, established the bank of Austen, Maunde and Austen in London in 1806. In the same year, Henry Austen, Edward Gray and William Vincent acquired 10 High Street in Alton and opened the bank of Austen, Gray and Vincent. The safe that they used is still in situ.

The Baverstock Brewery

The Alton Brewery was taken over by John Newman, father of John Henry (later Cardinal) Newman. John Newman had financial problems with his bank, Ramsbottom, Newman & Co. Ltd., had gone bankrupt and it seems he never paid for the Alton Brewery. The Newmans stayed in Alton until 1819 by which time the business was failing. John Newman died in 1824; John Henry Newman lived 1801-1890.

Grammar Schools

In his book of 1818, *Endowed Grammar Schools*, Nicholas Carlisle wrote that 'Rev. James Duncan, minister of West Worldham, being Seventy-two years of age, is supposed to be about to retire. This gentleman, on account of his age and infirmities, has declined taking Boarders or Day-Scholars, for a few years past, while he did, the charge for common boarders did not exceed £25 per annum.'

James Duncan's School is the highly respected Eggars Grammar School, in Alton, founded by John Eggar, the Act of Parliament authorising its foundation being the last public document signed by Charles I. West Worldham is where Heighes Woodforde married Mary Lamport on 9 October 1690 and was known to Mary Woodforde as 'Little Worldham'.[1] The living of West Worldham was a Perpetual Curacy, usually held since the sixteenth century by the Rector of Hartley Mauditt, as did Samuel Woodforde, James Woodforde's great-grandfather.

Sunday Travel

Several carriers were fined 20s and costs at Alton Petty Sessions in April 1829 for permitting their wagons to travel through Alton on a Sunday. The Magistrates expressed a determination to exercise their authority to deter others from transgressing in a similar manner.

Commutation of Tithes

On 9 June 1841, a meeting was called "to consider the Agreement made for the general commutation of the said Tithes (those of Alton parish), and for the purpose of appointing a Valuer or Valuers to Apportion the total sums agreed to be paid by way of Rent Charge in lieu of Tithes … pursuant to the provisions of an act passed in the sixth and seventh years of the reign of his late Majesty, King

William the Fourth, intitled, *An Act for the Commutation of Tithes in England and Wales*".

William IV reigned from 1830-1837. So Tithe Frolics might have continued for many more years, but it is doubtful if they would have been quite such jolly affairs as they were in the Parson's time.

> Dec. 3rd (1776)
> My Frolic for my People to pay Tithe to me was this Day &
> I gave them a good Dinner, Surloin of Beef rosted,
> a Leg of Mutton boiled & plumb Puddings in plenty – …
> Every Person well pleased, and were very happy indeed
> They had to drink Wine, Punch, and ale as much
> as they pleased …
> We had many droll Songs from some of them –
> (*Diary*, Vol. 7)

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

Following the appearance of the article about George Custance's life and early death in India, interest was aroused concerning the lady to whom he left a life interest in the wealth he possessed in England.

Carole Child has again employed her 'magic mouse' and discovered in the *Bristol Mercury* of 16 February 1830 that there was a marriage "At Walcot Church Charles Augustus Manning Esq., Capt. in his Majesty's royal regiment of Surrey militia and 2nd son of the late Rev. John Manning of Portland castle Dorsetshire to Margaret Elizabeth daughter of the late Peter Sherston Esq., of Stoberry Hill, Somerset."

George's aunt Sarah lived in the Walcot district of Bath and we can speculate that perhaps he met Margaret through her.

To complete the story (which could have been taken from Jane Austen!) how satisfactory it would be to discover the whereabouts of George's portrait and perhaps a miniature which he gave to Margaret.

Phyllis Stanley
Norwich

Dear Sir,

This is a rather long-winded response to the query which ended your editorial in Winter 2007: trust you are sitting comfortably …

I was brought up in an Essex village while my father spent his childhood in Snettisham in north-west Norfolk.

I noticed that some of the people in our village did not walk about in pairs but that the woman would be some paces behind the man. Not a universal practice, just some of the older couples. I asked my father why this was. He told me that in Norfolk it was customary to walk this way. I did not think to ask any further questions as to how courting couples took their walks.

My father was born in 1901. He always valued his Norfolk roots, connections and experiences. His grandfather was Rector of Edingthorpe, a tiny village in north-east Norfolk (much valued by Siegfried Sassoon). During stays with his grandparents it was his job to pump the organ for the several services then usual on Sunday. He was about 9 years old. I think it very effectively cauterized his views on Christianity. His grandmother abhorred liquor so to this day there is no P.H. in Edingthorpe. He found strictures could be outwitted as his uncle Bernard had a crate of beer sunk in the Rectory garden pond, attached to a rope over a tree branch for easy retrieval!

As a young man he played rugger for and captained the Eastern Counties team. His nickname was 'Norwich' Muriel. There was a slew of Muriel doctors across East Anglia including Cecil who had his practice in St Giles in Norwich. With all this background I feel my father was quite an authority on life and customs in East Anglia.

When I came to live in Norfolk I found again and again the great pride which exists in Norfolk's ability to "du differunt" from the rest of England. Describing relations who were not Norfolk residents, it was with a mixture of pity and contempt for those forced to live in "the Sheeres" (Shires) which meant anywhere *not* in Norfolk or Suffolk.

I have from my father's East Anglian collection a book, *Friends of Yesterday*, published in 1903 – vignettes of village worthies over the preceding century, told with the lovely dry Norfolk wit.

One, ironically titled 'Landed Gentry', is about the Broome sisters who had inherited (and worked) a rather small farm from their father. I quote: "Once a year, arrayed in her Sunday best, Susan carried her Tithe across to the Rectory. Customs die hard in the country so the Rector, who was old-fashioned, still received in person the first fruits of his flock, who expected to have a 'frolic' provided for them in return."

Susan always refused the invitation to dinner for, as she remarked, "Lawks, whatever should I du to be setting down along of the men?" However, she always enjoyed the customary glass of brown sherry with the Rector. Then following the offer and refusal of a cigar, a never-failing joke between them, Susan would gather up her silk shirts and bow herself out of the study with the grace of a duchess.

Coming forward into the 20th century can endorse the fact that country people are slow to change their ways and drop custom. My husband and I were visiting the James, a farming family at Talgarth in Brecon, in the late sixties. The demarcation between areas in the ancient farmhouse (whose Elizabethan staircase has its patina maintained by generations of James women) was stark. The James daughters and I were in the kitchen. I went off to look for something in the sitting room. When I returned to the kitchen, Mary, her eyes round with horror, said “Oh, you shouldn’t have gone in there, that’s for the men”. I was astonished.

However, when Mary managed to escape from Dada, the domestic tyrant, and marry Llewellyn from the next door mountain, she kept him waiting at the church for nearly 1½ hours. When at the reception we taxed her with this, she said with a twinkle “Oh, well, you must start as you mean to go on”.

Another contributing factor to Norfolk’s relative isolation from the rest of England and more liberating influences is that “canalmania” never reached it. I understand there is an Act of Parliament extant permitting a canal to go off the Grand Union (which goes round north of London). The route it would have taken is now mirrored by the M11 motorway.

If the Frolic was segregated in the 19th century in Norfolk would not the same hold true for the Weston Christmas dinner?

Anne Unwin
East Rudham

Dear Sir,

Some years ago, I purchased a pair of early Victorian watercolours. They were of Lord and Lady Bruce. I bought them, not because I was related to the family, but because of the quality of the art work, and so that a stranger, entering the room, might just think, if I said nothing, that I had some kind of link with the aristocracy. The paintings are by the artist Edwin Dalton Smith and had been exhibited at the Royal Academy. So! – I hear you say, what's that to do, if anything, with our Parson Woodforde Society? All right, don't push me. Nothing! Or so I thought, until a computer entered our household and I learned how to work the device. I thought I would try this Google thing I'd heard about, and found my way after some time – (OK, so I'm not Einstein) – to the Google site and popped in the artist's name. To my amazement, many items came up. Edwin Dalton Smith, Artist (England 1800-52?) and a brief history of his work. So, 'OK, I'm getting there'. His father was Anker Smith (1759-1819) also an artist and an engraver, and he had engraved and printed Samuel Woodforde's picture Andronicus, for Boydell's *Shakespeare*, 1793. Apparently, both Anker and Samuel were closely connected with Henry Hoare (died 1785) of Stourhead, Wiltshire, and many of their works are to be seen there.

That's it – now you have it. Now, I wonder how many other Woodforde members have similar unknown links? I'm off at the first opportunity to Stourhead. Oh, and by the way, just take a look at Edwin Dalton's paintings of flowers etc and note the detail. I wonder if our Samuel and Edwin ever met? I bet they did, but perhaps I should leave that to you to follow up.

Brian Houghton
Norwich

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

> A more officious, busy-bodied Woman in all Cases
> relating to other People's Concerns I know not –
> More particularly when ill – a true Jobish Friend.
>
> *James Woodforde, Diary of a Country Parson:*
>
> *Febry. 19, 1798, Monday.*

Researching the details for this story was like unravelling jigsaw pieces thrown haphazardly into a box containing several puzzles, all in period dress. Inevitably, a few salient bits, like the punch line, were missing and had to be conjectured, but the people are real.

'What brings you to the White Hart so early, Stephen, with the haymaking in full swing?'

Johnny Reeve poured a jug of his newest brew.

'Father sent me home since my mind wasn't on the scything and the women folk sent me packing with a flea in my ear. "You're not wanted here," my Aunt Michael Andrews said. "It's women's work." I couldn't hardly hear a word above my Susanna's terrible shrieks.'

' 'Twas ever thus, as I well know, being as I practise something in the doctoring way.'

'I wish I had your talents, Johnny.'

'The midwife's at yours with all she needs?'

Stephen Andrews nodded and looked gloomily into the depths of his tankard. If only his own mother had been spared, after such terrible suffering, to attend the lying in. But no, poor Sukey would have to put up with that Tartar his Uncle had married. And she'd even fetched out the old crone her mother, as if he needed reminding how he'd lowered himself by marrying the woman's maid-servant. Not that he'd minded wedding Sukey, she was pretty enough for anyone, but he could have done better, and her tongue grew sharper as the weeks went by, as he knew to his cost, Well, it was done now.

'You recall that rumbustious night we celebrated Admiral Lord Nelson's great victory of the Nile?'

'Do I! We was toasting his health, and all his noble officers too, till two or three in the morning, and singing till the rafters near fell down. *Rule Britannia, Britannia Rules the Waves.*'

Johnny Reeve had never been in the choir.

'That were the night that did it, Johnny, more's the pity. I went out the yard to make water, and there was Sukey, quite brazen-faced, come to fetch home her mistress' man-servant, she said. I'd eyed her over often enough, but that night, the liquor made me bold and the temptation was too much, and for all it was November, I tumbled her in the hayloft. Not that she wasn't willing and 'twas good sport.' Stephen's eyes gleamed at the memory. 'And then, before I knew it, old Mrs Clark her mistress had wormed it out of her that she was with child and by me, and my Aunt Michael had us hot foot to the altar before you could say Jack Robinson.'

'Marry in haste, repent in leisure,' laughed Johnny. 'And she'll be giving you one a year from now on, you mark my words. But the first be always the worst.'

'That's what my Aunt Michael said, gloating, "She'll be worse before she's better".' Stephen drained his tankard uneasily. 'Perhaps I should get home.'

'Let them be, they'll send for you soon enough. Here, have a drop of Captain Moonshine's.'

''Why my Uncle Michael married that frimmocking woman I cannot tell. She's as sour as a wedge for all her finery and past child-bearing I'd say. You should have heard the way she preached on at me when she ferreted out that little Lizzie Gray was mine. "That child is the very image of your mother," she crowed. "You should be ashamed of yourself for not making an honest woman of Rachel, and I'll make your sins known all round the parish, mark my words." Why, I was scarce out of long-clothes, Johnny, a mere stripling. Besides, Parson made nothing of it. He's not one for preachifying, and a true friend of the poor, out of his own pocket let alone doling out the Poor Relief in time of need. Why, he even sent my mother a bone of roast veal from his own table when she were on her death bed, and she did eat hearty of it. To think little Lizzie is nine years old! That was the first year I was at Parson's Tythe Frolic. Father was took queer so I went to pay his dues and got drunk with the best of them though under age as Parson well knew.' Stephen paused to replenish his spirits. 'And then my Uncle Michael started courting that woman.'

'Maybe 'twas for her money. He was always set on bettering himself.'

'Very uppish she is, my Aunt. Made a proper guy of herself, showing off at church after the marriage, and then trying to keep up with the gentry by asking Parson to sell her a pair of his fine black ducks. Fair put out she was when he refused money and made her a present of them. Howsomever, Parson's Boy Billy Downing were pleased with the handsome tip she give him. Do you recall when she took it upon herself to take young Billy Gunton in hand? Treated him more like a son than a servant, hauling him off to Parson for the Good of his soul when he was weak and poorly. The next thing we hear he's perked up and taken to drink and debt in Norwich.'

'I expect she drove him to it.'

'Then he takes the King's Shilling and comes back covered in glory. And my Aunt takes all the credit upon herself. Thinks herself Lady Bountiful, traipsing round the sick with a bowl of gruel and good advice, especially since my uncle took Smith's farm, and as for death beds … it fair makes my blood boil the way she bullied my poor mother, and her friends Mr and Mrs Mann before her. And that time Parson took a fit in church and came to warm himself at our house till he recovered. Poor mother was quite overcome with vexation that she was too ill to receive him and my Aunt took all the glory. Poor Mother, she never got over it, God rest her soul.'

'I hear Mrs Andrews thought of setting up a carriage when Parson sent his fine relations to call on her. It's about time she was taken down a peg or two.'

'Ah!' said Stephen mysteriously. 'You remember when Mr Fisher had to do Penance for calling the old besom a whore?'

'I do. And they say it cost her dear for taking it to the Bishop's Court. She was almost as much talked about as Hannah Snell, the female who was twenty-one years a soldier and no-one any the wiser. Why, it must be all of twenty years since she came here to show herself.'

'And did you ever wonder who set Mr Fisher on to making that remarkable statement? Not that he needed much inveigling after all her airs and graces', smirked Stephen.

'You don't mean …?'

'I do! Fair put out she was, and never guessed. I laughed myself silly at her discomfiture! I reckon I paid her back handsome for all her spiteful remarks and bigoty ways.'

'Wasn't that a bit hard? After all, she is always kind to the poor.'

Stephen laughed scornfully. 'Did you never hear what Parson said to Miss Woodforde about her? Billy Gunton had it from his sister Sally Gunton, that's cook and dairy maid at the Parsonage. Seeing Billy was boiling over with some juicy bit of tittle tattle, I soon prised it out of him. It seems my Aunt Michael called on Parson demanding that the Sacrament should be administered to old Mrs Mann, she being very near her end. Parson sends at once to Mr Maynard at Attlebridge, and then turns round to his niece and says of my Aunt, "A more officious busy-bodied Woman in all Cases relating to other People's Concerns I know not. More particularly when Ill".

' "I've never heard you say anything so uncharitable in all my life, Uncle!' says Miss Woodforde, quite taken aback. "Your words are more fitting for my sharp tongue. Indeed, she's a true Jobish Friend".'

Stephen set down his tankard. 'Of course, I made sure it got back to her ears and all round the parish. Serves her right.'

Sounds of heavy feet clattered down the hard-baked path.

'I'll just slip out the back,' said Stephen. 'I can't face a crowd, not at a time like this.'

* * * * *

Aunt Michael was sitting, arms akimbo, at the kitchen table.

'And where do you think you've been all this time in the hour of her need?' She sniffed Stephen's hot breath. 'I suppose you've been drowning your sorrows at the Hart as usual.'

'Sukey is all right, isn't she?' Stephen asked tremulously, wondering if the silence betokened his young wife's death. 'And what of the child?'

'They are both doing well, and no thanks to you. You've got a fine boy, Stephen, and not a bit like Lizzie.' He felt his eyes pricking and sat down suddenly, quite overwhelmed with relief.

'At least you've done your duty and married Susannah, much good may it do you.' A little shock of anger twisted inside him. Stephen tried to protest, but the voice went on. 'You thought choosing a wife was all your own doing, didn't you, Stephen? That's where you're wrong. Who do you think it was that put temptation in your way that night? I discovered Sukey mooning about the house one day, quite distraught. Then she confessed she loved you, you of all people. So I sent her after you to the Hart, knowing you'd soon fall for her charms, being in liquor with hurrahing for Lord Nelson. I'm sure you've discovered what a terrible shrew you've married, just like her mother before her and her sisters too.'

Stephen, stunned, allowed himself to be taken upstairs. In spite of his aunt's spiteful disclosures, his heart overflowed with tenderness as he gazed down at the mother and child sleeping peacefully in the big bed, breathing gently in the silence.

'He's got a look of Billy Gunton about him, don't you think?' whispers Aunt Michael. 'In fact I'd say he's the very image of his father.'

(Reprinted, with thanks, from Mischief and Mayhem*, Wensum Wordsmiths, 1998. The author, of Framlingham, Suffolk is not to be confused with our membership secretary of the same name.)*

BOOK REVIEW

Michael Stone (ed.), *The Diary of John Longe (1765-1834) Vicar of Coddenham*, The Boydell Press for the Suffolk Records Society, 51, 2008, lxvii + 314pp, £35.

Last year the Suffolk Records Society celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation and the publication of its fiftieth volume. A late-comer to the circle of county learned societies, it quickly established itself with a distinguished series of volumes. None have been more valuable to historians generally than the half dozen diaries and journals which have appeared in the last twenty-five years: the Southwold diaries of James Maggs who missed very little of what went on in the small port and resort between 1818 and 1876; the journals of David Elisha Davy's excursions in Suffolk between 1823 and 1844 recording his visits to parishes for a history of the county which was never published; the diaries of James Oakes, the big Bury St Edmund's yarn dealer and country banker who kept a diary from 1778 to 1827 in which he noted every aspect of the town's hectic social and political life – or at least that of its elite; and *Stutters Casebook*, the notes of a young resident house apothecary and surgeon in Bury's hospital between 1839 and 1841. This year's publication, the diary of John Longe, builds upon this list beautifully to illustrate the world of the wealthiest section of the English country clergy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

In fact, John Longe was a Norfolk man through and through, the elder son of the rector of Spixworth who had married an Elwin of Booton. The Longes were a family of middling Norfolk gentry established at Spixworth Hall since the 1690s. John Longe was educated at Bungay and Norwich Grammar schools and Trinity College, Cambridge. With a clerical father, himself a younger son, John Longe had no more than modest prospects when he was ordained priest in December 1789. Within a few weeks, through the good offices of his former headmaster at Bungay, he had become the curate of Nicholas Bacon, the wealthy Vicar of Coddenham- cum-Crowfield. It was the beginning of an extraordinary series of events.

James Woodforde had met both Nicholas Bacon and his elder brother, John, more than a decade earlier, during a week-long visit to Bosmere House near Needham Market with his friend Washbourne Cooke in May 1775. Cooke's brother-in-law, the owner of Bosmere, Captain (later Rear-Admiral) Samuel Uvedale, took both of them to drink tea with the Bacon brothers on consecutive afternoons. The elder, John Bacon, a bachelor reluctantly in holy orders through parental pressure, was in the midst of building a 'noble new house', Shrubland Park. As was the way in the eighteenth century, Woodforde also recorded his reputed income, just as if it were advertised by a label around Bacon's neck: '[he] has 5,000 per annum'. On the following afternoon, the Uvedales drove the two young men 'to another Mr Bacon's Brother of the other Gentleman & a Clergyman also who lives at Coddingham [sic] and there we drank Tea, this Afternoon & played at Quadrille at 3d per Fish – He has a very pretty House indeed lately built'. Wealthy as the brothers were, John building his fine new house to the designs of James Paine and Nicholas enjoying his rectory, the smartest in Suffolk with its Adamish interiors, the Uvedales disclosed the cloud that hung over them, Woodforde noting their 'great Misfortune, the Family of the Bacons have always been mad, but the above Mr [John] Bacon is clear of it only he is apt to be very low sometimes'. Today, we might describe both brothers as chronic manic depressives.

By the time John Longe had taken up his curacy at Coddenham in January 1790 John Bacon had died. Two years earlier, Nicholas, his heir, had sold the newly built Shrubland Park and the major part of the estate to William Middleton MP of Crowfield, retaining several farms himself and the advowsons of Coddenham-cum-Crowfield and Barham. He had also married, at the age of forty-eight in 1780, Anne Marie Browne of Tunstall, a bride over twenty years younger. She died, childless, five years later. Her younger sister Charlotte became acknowledged as the heiress to Nicholas's considerable estate. John Longe lost no time in seizing a heaven-sent opportunity. Within nine months of coming to Coddenham he had married Charlotte Browne.

Nicholas Bacon lived for a further half dozen years and died quite suddenly in late August 1796. Longe noted several times that month that he was 'very high' or 'very unsettled and wild'. Yet he kept up a constant round of entertainments to the end. Within forty-eight hours of his death Longe had 'met a large party' at the vicarage. On his death Longe, through his wife, and except for some heirlooms, principally pictures, became the life tenant of a large settled estate. The following year he presented himself to the Coddenham-cum-Crowfield living. It was one of the best in Suffolk, producing an annual income of over £936 in 1826. In addition, Longe now owned almost 900 acres in the two parishes, some of which he farmed on his own account, and Charlotte had an appreciable investment income. When agricultural prices were at their height during the French Wars he enjoyed an income of not far short of £2,000, one placing him on a par with the wealth of the lesser gentry.

For the next forty years, with his newly acquired riches, John Longe lived the life of the archetypal squarson. The diaries record it in detail, at least for the years for which they survive: 1796, 1797 (extracts only), 1826-7, 1831 and 1833. Covering only six years of his long ministry, they nevertheless provide, in spite of the brevity of Longe's daily entries, a wonderful insight into a world now so distant from that of the modern Anglican Church. What do they reveal? There is, of course, a good deal about his family. His wife quickly produced three children who died at birth, then, almost as rapidly and all surviving, a daughter and four sons. After his first wife died in 1812 he remarried, five years later, Frances Ward of Salhouse Hall, a neighbour of the Longes at Spixworth. One son died just short of his majority, two entered the church, and the eldest inherited the Spixworth estate in the 1820s. All were Cambridge educated. Family rifts are recorded, partly over trusts and the disposal of property, partly because the eldest son and his wife, unusually in this period, separated quite early in their marriage. The neighbouring clergy and gentry were generously and frequently entertained. The dining room at Coddenham (it matched Trollope's Archdeacon Grantley's uppish observations about their essential dimensions) seated eighteen comfortably. Morning calls and entertainments were easily returned across a wide neighbourhood by carriage, phaeton or gig. Visits to family and excursions in Norfolk were the extent of Longe's travels, besides frequent trips to London in 1796-7 to secure the Bacon inheritance. It should be remembered, however, that there is an almost thirty year gap in the diaries between 1798 and 1826. But it is in the range of Longe's activities that the diary brings to light the vocational patterns, beyond church life itself, of the wealthiest rural clergy in Georgian England. Pursuing these interests clearly sets him apart from mere parish priests such as Woodforde.

First and foremost, John Longe was a man of considerable business acumen. He successfully saw off those parties who contested Nicholas Bacon's will on the grounds of his capacity to make one; he was a match for the Middletons in disputes about encroachments and the tithes at Crowfield; he could thoroughly research a case; he was fastidious in his accounts. These business skills were employed in the wider community. His range is impressive: active justice of the peace from 1803 until a fortnight before his death, turnpike trustee, governor of the incorporated House of Industry for the Bosmere and Claydon hundred, militia recruit in 1797, and mainstay of the Coddenham Book Club. To all, he brought firm commitment and deeply-held, conservative views. Bitterly opposed to Catholic Emancipation and Parliamentary Reform and critical of the Press, his views were sustained by an active role in Tory politics in Suffolk and membership of the Suffolk Pitt Club.

If John Longe was astute in business matters, we remain largely in the dark about his inner faith. Certainly, as in all matters, he was conscientious in carrying out his church duties. He prided himself that he was always resident, holding no other livings. Two services were held each Sunday at Coddenham and one at Crowfield. In these he was assisted by a curate and, when he reached his middle sixties, he afforded two. They were reasonably well paid and provided with a rent-free cottage; invariably they were invited to dinner on a Sunday. His own parochial visiting seems to have been minimal; his sermons (a list of them survives), as was usual, were read and frequently repeated. He was much involved in the affairs of the well-endowed charity school in the village and after 1800 its church Sunday school, interestingly used for selection to the fifty-pupil charity institution. In the 1820s he provided allotments for some of the poor in one of his fields. The village's dissenters he ignored, invariably they were dismissed as of 'low education and condition'.

In Coddenham his interests and duties were extensive, his rule there clearly unopposed. When he completed Bishop Bathurst's

Visitation Return in 1820 he declared, 'there are no families of note in it but that of the Vicar'. Those of well-educated curates, genteel maiden ladies, and retired army officers, all regular visitors to the vicarage, didn't count. Though he ran his household on the same authoritarian lines as his parish, there was another side to John Longe. He sketched, he enjoyed his garden, he recorded the appearance of nightingales in it each spring, he attended the Norwich Musical Festival in 1826, he had antiquarian interests, he even spent part of his Great Yarmouth holiday in 1826 researching in Dawson Turner's noted library. He could show sympathy and tact in family affairs. When his eldest son's marriage broke down, he displayed concern and understanding for his daughter-in-law and her parents. Yet, oddly, he made little financial provision for his second wife, presumably because the bulk of his estate was firmly tied by his marriage settlement of 1791.

The value of the diary to historians is enormously increased by a forty-three page, first-rate introductory essay, eight other documents, ten appendices, a glossary and notes on people. Of the additional documents, the thirty-page servants' wages book is the most interesting. This and the inventory of Coddenham Vicarage c.1797 and the list of plate in the house made twenty years earlier best illustrates the gap between clergymen of Longe's rank and the likes of James Woodforde. Members of the Parson Woodforde Society, as well as historians generally, will find these lists fascinating. Coddenham Vicarage, with its well-furnished and decorated drawing room, common and great eating parlours, and library, is the model for those big rectory houses of the best beneficed clergy whose incomes rose in line with rapidly advancing agricultural prices after 1750 and who, like Longe, became active as justices of the peace and pillars of local administration. To run a house on this scale, even after his children had left home, Longe employed ten indoor servants (headed by a butler and housekeeper) and a gardener. The diary itself contains few comments on their lives, but the servants' book records in detail their wages, their service, dismissal and appointment. In the 1820s the total bill of Longe's servants was around £200 with a further £50 for their liveries (brown with yellow facings and crested buttons bought by the gross) and dress. Beer allowances were generous with a daily ration of three pints of strong and three of table beer for each male servant and one of each for female members of staff. This meant that Longe brewed on a large scale for a domestic brewer, four hogsheads or 216 gallons at a time.

Longe must have worried about the cost of their upkeep for at one point he makes a slip in his calculations that each one was costing him 4 shillings a day besides their wages. He must have intended his reckoning to be per week, otherwise the cost for the upkeep and wages of ten servants would have been in excess of a totally improbable £900 a year. Moreover, he well knew that agricultural labourers in Suffolk in the 1820s were desperately struggling to live on a miserable 8 shillings a week. The turnover of servants was, as might be expected, quite high. In 1822 there was a succession of no fewer than four cooks at the vicarage. Alarmingly, some of them appear to have learnt on the job. This suggests that the copious supplies of wine, especially port, were possibly more pleasing than the plentiful dishes that the butler and footman carried to the table. Longe's servants didn't have to struggle with a tithe dinner every December. Tithe payers were entertained at the Crown Inn each year, not in the vicarage as at Weston Longville. Was their number too large to accommodate or the Great Eating Parlour at Coddenham too smart for the occasion? William Cobbett would have advanced the latter to illustrate the yawning social gap between the clergy of Regency England and their parishioners. Yet Longe was always inviting his farm tenants and their wives to dinner every New Year. Old traditions in Coddenham had not completely disappeared.

Michael Stone, himself for seven years acting as the incumbent of Coddenham (although not living in the vicarage, even Longe's son, Roger, who succeeded him in 1834, immediately reduced its size), is to be congratulated on the immense amount of work he has put into his painstaking edition of the diary. His editorial vigour and thoroughness brings the succinct entries of the diary and John Longe himself to life. Of course, it is not comparable to Woodforde's diary. That, with the sheer detail of its daily entries for over forty years, is truly incomparable. But Longe's diary now enters the roll-call of those dozen or so clerical diaries which open up for us the world of the English Anglican Church in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was one of sharply defined hierarchies. Longe's diary provides us with invaluable insights into the lives of those well-connected, well-to-do rural clergy who could, without further clerical advancement, combine church duties with local justice, politics and administration. For those who enjoyed it, it was, if increasingly and widely questioned, a fulfilling role. Yet even by 1830 this world so vividly recorded by John Longe was changing. The Oxford Movement, swelling religious fervour and real competition from the Dissenters which could, as Longe had, no longer be ignored. All ushered in a period of profound reform in the Church and a transformation in the lives of its clergy.

Editor's Note – Readers will remember Michael Stone's article 'The Parson and Three New Mansions in Mid-Suffolk' which appeared in the Journal for Summer 2007 and the lovely illustration of Coddenham Vicarage on the front cover of the same issue.

The book under review may be obtained for the annual subscription to the Suffolk Records Society (£12.50), details at www.suffolkrecordssociety.com or from Suffolk Records Society, Hon. Secretary, Claire Barker MA, Westhorpe Lodge, Westhorpe, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 4TA.

HARRY PECKHAM AT THE SORBONNE

The Sorbonne was built by Cardinal Richelieu in which are apartments for thirty-six doctors who judge of the orthodoxy of publications.[1] But the Cardinal's intention was not, I doubt, so much the cause of religion as of vanity, to erect a building in which might be placed his monument. The church describes a cross and is paved with variegated marble. In the center of the choir is the tomb of the Cardinal, in marble, finely executed.[2] He reclines on a mattress, clothed in a loose robe of inimitable drapery. Religion supports his head, whilst Science sits weeping at his feet. The figures are as large as life and it is deemed the *chef d'oeuvre* of Girardon. The body of the Cardinal, with the mattress and the figure of Religion are all chissel'd out of one slab of marble.

The grand altar is likewise of marble, over which is a celestial glory, by Le Brun. In the chapel dedicated to the Virgin is her statue in stone, masterly done by Desjardins, or Martin de Jardin, who executed the statue of Louis XIV in the Place des Victoires.[3] You will find in a little adjoining chapel a picture of St Anthony preaching in the desert. He is seated in an armed chair, not a very common convenience in a desert, nor a very proper attitude for a preacher; but his hair is grey which I suppose to be an apology for his sitting. Coypel is the master and the piece does him credit.

NOTES

1. The Sorbonne was established by Robert de Sorbon in 1253 but the Chapelle de la Sorbonne was, as Peckham suggests, built as a monument to Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642). The Académie française was established by Richelieu in 1637 and reluctantly took on the role of literary and dramatic censor.
2. By François Girardon (1628-1715) – his tomb of Richelieu is probably his greatest achievement. Cole called it "the greatest Ornament of this Church or indeed of any I ever saw, either here or elsewhere" – Stokes, F.G.(ed.), *A Journal*...1931.
3. Martin Desjardins (1640-94).

Harry Peckham was a school and college friend of James Woodforde. Martin Brayne's edition of his continental tour is, at last, due for publication by Nonsuch on 20 October under the title Harry Peckham's Tour. *This is an extract.*

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 £16 (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

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