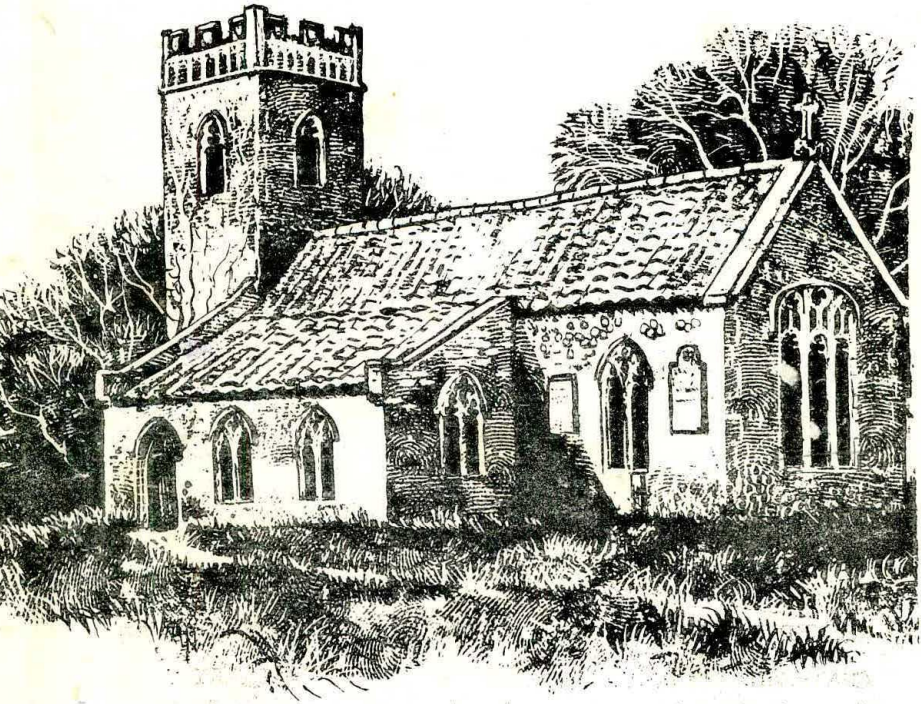
PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

Quarterly Journal



ST. FAITH'S CHURCH, GREAT WITCHINGHAM
by John Last

VOL. XIV, No. 3 AUTUMN 1981

At bottom ... the appeal of history is imaginative. Our imagination craves to behold our ancestors as they really were, going about their daily business and daily pleasure.

– G. M. TREVELYAN

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EDITORIAL

At the end of May, a little earlier than usual this year, the Parson Woodforde Society held what has by common consent been voted one of the most successful of all our annual Gatherings in Somerset. A full account of this, written once again by Mrs. Sally Knight, appears on another page. In addition, Canon Bates, who preached the sermon at Thurloxton Church on the Sunday morning, has very kindly allowed me to print the full text of it here. We were all delighted to see Canon Wilson among us that weekend. Dillington House, where the Gathering was held, was once the home of Lord North, that Georgian Prime Minister who once moved Woodforde to one of his very rare political utterances. I am afraid the statesman would not recognise his old home, in the coarse 1830's architecture of the building which replaced it, but inside it was very comfortable. We were treated most hospitably and the food, I thought, was excellent.

The Society's most ambitious publishing venture, the projected three volume edition of the Norfolk Diary 1776-81, has not yet seen the issue of its first volume as I write this, but by the time the present number of the Journal appears, it may well be in print. I hope very much that members who purchase copies will think the outlay is money well spent. In June the Oxford University Press reissued the 5-volume Beresford edition of the diary, at a very high price. It was the mixture as before, with no correction or revision of any kind included. I prepared a statement setting out the Society's position with regard to the whole question of publishing Woodforde and sent it to the Eastern Daily Press, where part of it was used in a feature article in "Arts Forum", together with a rejoinder by O.U.P. I am afraid that they do not have a very good case, and it was hardly strengthened by the fact that the account by the Promotions Manager of the publish-

ing history of the Beresford edition was full of glaring inaccuracies.

Mr. J. E. Holmes, whose extremely interesting illustrated talks given at the last two Gatherings will be vividly remembered, has at my request written of Quebec, near Dereham, that "whimsical Building" which Woodforde inspected with his friend Mr. Hall in 1781. Dr. Case has analyzed the Parson's copy of the 1801 census form, now in the Norfolk Record Office. Meticulous as ever, he provided more information than the census authorities asked for!

Readers will notice a slight change in the layout of the Contents Page, following a complaint made by a member at the A.G.M., to the effect that the various contributions were not clearly enough noted as being by their particular authors. In fact, the name of each has for a long time now been printed at the foot of his or her article. The only unsigned contributions have been my own; and this omission was deliberate. Ideally, an editor should write nothing, but simply choose and arrange the work of his contributors. I thought it was scarcely necessary to advertise the fact that I was a contributor myself. However, with the new format of the Contents Page, the work and the author's name will appear together.

I am all the time receiving letters from various individuals and bodies, asking for information about various matters connected with Woodforde, which is a very encouraging sign. The latest was from the Norwich Branch of the 'National Council for the Single Woman and her Dependents', who wanted information for their News Letter about Nancy "as a single woman who devoted many years to caring for her uncle". I had to reply, in what was no doubt considered as a horrid and insensitive male way, that Nancy could hardly be considered as fitting into this category, since

there were five servants in the house who looked after the caring department. I might have added that when Woodforde was taken seriously ill in 1797, Nancy was so little able to cope with his illness that she sent frantically off to Somerset for Uncle John and Brother William to come and help her. One of the things I have no wish to do is to assist in the creation of new legends about Woodforde. There are enough of these around already!

- R. L. WINSTANLEY

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

It is a pleasure to record here that one of our committee members, Mrs. Sally Knight, featured in the recent Birthday Honours List. Sally, who lives at Mattishall, was awarded an M.B.E. for her long period of voluntary work with SSAFA., the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmans' Families Association, not only here in England but in places as far apart as Austria and Malaysia. It is not long since we had occasion to note that her husband, Col. "Bob" Knight had been appointed County Commander of the St. John Ambulance Brigade and Association. Many congratulations to them both.

"Jimmy" James, recently of Weston Longville, tells me that he is now getting settled in at Diss, his new parish and where he and his wife are making a new home. Jimmy says that shortly before leaving Weston he had organised what turned out to be his last "promotion" there. It consisted of a bookmark bearing a line drawing of Parson Woodforde and containing some description of All Saints' Church. The bookmarks have been produced in five different colours (one for each of the five diary volumes, Jimmy says) and are priced at 10p each. During the interregnum they may be obtained from Mr. Anthony Thomas, Woodforde Farm, Weston Longville and a full set may be had for 65p, includ-

ing postage. Cheques should be made payable to All Saints' P.C.C. Weston Longville.

The printing of the first volume of the Society's 'Early Norfolk Years' of the diary is coming along, albeit slowly. The latest information to hand is that September is the likely month. It has been decided to use the same format and binding as for the second edition of 'Ansford I' and the more recent 'Ansford II' which proved so acceptable to members. The reprint by O.U.P. of the five volumes as edited by the late Mr. John Beresford does not appear to have aroused the interest that was hoped for. Some members will, perhaps, have seen the article in the E.D.P. in which the reprint was compared with the Society's own productions in which every word that Woodforde wrote is printed, together with the admirable notes of our editor.

G. H. BUNTING

"RUNTY"

The m.s. diary entry for 22 August 1778 contains the following:

* To Cary for things from Norwich &c. - p.^{d} - 0: 3: 2½
To Ditto for Eggs sold for me at Norwich rec.^{d} - 0: 3: 4
M.^{r} Cary was very runty about the Eggs, he carried for me
said he would not be troubled any more with them.

'Runty' = "surly, ill-tempered, disagreeable, obstinate". - Wright: 'Dialect Dictionary' 5, 191. Apparently a Norfolk expression which the diarist had picked up since his arrival.

"A WHIMSICAL BUILDING".

On 20 March 1781 Parson Woodforde writes:

> About 12. o'clock I took a ride to Dereham and Will went with me - Got there about 2. o'clock put up my Horses at the Kings Arms kept by one Girling and there I supped & slept; had a very good Bed - Soon after I got to Dereham I walked to M.r Halls Rooms he lodges at a Barbers by name Field, and there I dined and spent the Afternoon with him by Appointment - We had for Dinner a fine Lobster hot and some Mutton Stakes, had from the Kings Arms - Before Dinner M.r Hall and myself took a Walk about Dereham, went & saw a whimsical Building called Quebec

Quebec Castle, House or Hall has an interesting history. It was built in 1759 by Mr. "Justice" Samuel Rash of Shipdham to commemorate the storming of Quebec and in honour of his patron Lord Townshend who commanded the British forces following the death of Wolfe.

Samuel Rash was regarded as a bit of an oddity. He seems to have indulged in building as a hobby and Quebec Castle was humorously referred to as being "carpenter's Gothic". It featured towers and battlements, and was quite out of keeping with the elegant style of building of the period.

The trees in the park were planted in formations to represent Wolde's troops' dispositions at the battle of Quebec. The battle of Waterloo was later commemorated elsewhere in a similar manner.

Later occupants of the house were Sir John Leeke, Bart., and his wife Lady Elizabeth Leeke. They

seem to have come down in life, because on his death in Norwich in 1816 he is described as "hostler at the Lobster Inn", and Lady Leeke dying about two years later was recorded as a washerwoman.

Another occupant was Earl St. John. When the Lee Warner family bought the property they had little sympathy with Mr. Rash's design and radically altered the appearance of the house. The Rev. B. J. Armstrong in his account of Quebec Castle says: "Mr. Warner should be thanked for the improvement in its appearance as far as such a tasteless erection was capable of improvement without complete demolition".

Among other owners were General Bulwer in 1900, then the Wilson family. In 1948 it became St. Christopher's School, run by Dr. Puddy, and so continued until 1956. In 1957 it was sold and later handed over to the Quebec Hall Trust. This Trust was formed to convert the Hall into an old people's hostel, along with 48 bungalows for the elderly to be built in the grounds.

In May 1960 Lieutenant-General Sir William Dobbie (the famous Governor of Malta during the wartime siege) performed the opening ceremony, and it has continued very happily to this day.

Most of the fine trees are gone and the local golf club occupies much of the park, but the house and bungalows have a peaceful quiet dignity near, yet apart from, the busy market town. Such a contrast with the sad "House of Industry" visited by Parson Woodforde on that same day in March 1781.

THE 1801 CENSUS FOR WESTON LONGVILLE

It occurs to me that the information contained in the 1801 census return for Weston might be of some interest to those members of the Parson Woodforde Society who know the characters in the diary so very well. The census return of 1801 was in fact the first of a series which has continued at intervals of ten years to the present time, with a single break in the war year 1941. The early returns contained only numbers of people, and the first return to contain more detail than this was taken in 1841. However, in 1851, places of birth were included for the first time, and this and later returns are accordingly of particular value to the genealogist. Thus, in the 1851 return one finds everyone in a household named, together with the relationship of each to the head of the household; age, marital status, occupation and place of birth. With this information in mind it was therefore only vague curiosity which led me to examine the 1801 return for Weston which is to be found at the County Record Office (Ref: PD 92/35). I was in for a very pleasant surprise.

Information collected for the 1801 census return was entered upon printed forms. The responsibility for collecting the data was vested in the incumbent of the parish who while filling out his return sometimes made a second copy for himself. It is fortunate for us that this was done, wherever it was done, since the original returns for the first three decadal census years were all destroyed. The census document with which we are concerned here is, in fact, one of these private copies, but it is clear that the wording of the original form was reproduced exactly. All the information is entered on one sheet of paper and set out in the form of tables and summaries, all drawn out and written by hand. The format and construction of phrases show that a prescribed

working was being followed and copied. The entire document is in the hand of James Woodforde, despite the fact that his name appears to have been written into a space provided, after the remainder had been drawn up.

All that Woodforde ever wrote about his participation in the census is contained in a single passage in the diary, part of the entry for 9 April 1801. It should be remembered that by this stage of his life he was far more interested in the symptoms of his physical malaise than in any extraneous circumstances whatever:

> ... Young Stephen Andrews called on me this Morning bringing me an Account of the Number of Inhabitants of the Parish, Males & Females &c. &c.

As far as I can see, the information on the front of the sheet of paper supplies all the information that was required. To my delight, however, I found that on the reverse appears a comprehensive list of all the names of the householders of Weston; what today we should call the "raw data" from which the numerical totals were calculated.

The front page is largely taken up with a table of numbers of Baptisms, Burials and Marriages beneath a title. At the foot of the table is a certificate signed by Woodforde, and along the right hand side a summary of numerical information:

The Title: "Form of Answers by the clergymen in England to the Questions contained in the Schedule to an Act for taking an Account of the Population of Great Britain and if the Increase or Diminution thereof".

Sub-heading: "County &c. Norfolk. Hundred &c. Eynsford, City, Town &c. - . Parish &c. Weston".

The Table gives the number of Baptisms and Burials (males and females) for every tenth year from 1700 to 1770 and then for each year from 1780 to 1800; it also gives the number of marriages for each year from 1754 to 1800. From this kind of data it was presumably intended to estimate how the total population was changing. Along the right hand side appears the following: "Stephen Andrews - Church-Warden's Account of the Population of Weston, April 8th. 1801 - of all the inhabited Houses - Families - Males - Females - Agriculture - Trade &c. - Inh. Houses 48, Families 69, Males 123, Females 112, Total 365, Agriculture 117, Trade &c. 22, Total 365. The numbers do not add up, so presumably children below a certain age were excluded from "Males" and "Females". "Agriculture" and "Trade" presumably refer to the numbers in that kind of employment. The Certification at the foot of the page reads: "Certificate of the Clergyman - I J^{S}. Woodforde, Rector (Vicar, Curate, or officiating Minister) of the Parish (Township &c.) of Weston (Longville) in the County of Norfolk - do certify, That the above Return contains, to the best of my Knowledge & Belief, a full & true Answer to the Questions contained in the Schedule Annexed - Witness Stephen Andrews - one of the Overseers (or substantial Householders) of the said Parish of W. - this 18th Day of March 1801".

I believe that the above contains the information required for the census return. On turning the sheet over, however, one finds the lists of names of householders, together with the number of people in each house. For me, at the time I found this document, this was very useful indeed, because it confirmed and indicated that certain persons had left Weston by this time.

"An Account of People in Number of each House in Weston taken by Stephen Andrews Jun^{r}. April 1801.

(Why did Woodforde sign in March?)

John Custance Esq. (16), Press Custance Esq. (4), James Woodforde Rector (7), Jno. Girling (17), Will^m Howlett (10), Rob^t Emery (9), John Moor (7), John Baker (7), Stephen Andrews Sen^r (2), Stephen Andrews Jun^r (5), Michael Andrews (7), Thomas Baker (5), Thomas Salisbury (5), Will^m Bidewell (7), James Pegg (2), Henry Case (3), Pratt (4). /New column starts here/ Will^m Curson (8), Tho^s Arthurton Sen^r (2), Tho^s Arthurton Jun^r (7), Will^m Large (10), Will^m Woodcock (7), John Leeds (6), Will^m Richmond (7), Henry Chubbick (7), Henry Briggum /or Brigjum?/ (6), John Baker (7), Tho^s Chambers (5), James Pollard (4), Joseph Bowles (9), Rob^t Downing Sen^r (3), Roger Sherwood (4), Will^m Walker (7), John Clarke (7), Paul Bowdon (9), John Elliott (3), John Daines (3), /New column starts here/ John Denny (5), Will^m Spraggs (8), Andrew Spraggs (9), Widow Cupper (8), John Hubbard (8), Will^m Bushell (5), James Hardy (6), Henry Baker (9), Charles Cary (3), Robert Cary (2), Richard Wiseman (5), George Gunton (2), John Buck (4), James Knights (3), John Whisson (4), John Harrison (6), John Norton (2), Will^m Hardy (2), Timothy Tooley (1), Widow Case (1), /New column starts here/ Widow Warton (2), Henry Dunnell (8), Widow Dunnell (1), Woman Woods (3), Joseph Adcock (1), Widow Ward (1), Will^m Betts (4), James Chapman (5), Phillip Chapman (3), Robert Downing Jun^r (2), John Heaver (3)".

There are 68 names despite the 69 families mentioned in the summary tables. It should be noted that these 68 families were living in 48 inhabited houses.

Henry Case was my great-grandfather's great-grandfather and Widow Case was his mother, the widow of "poor old William Case" whom Woodforde buried in 1788. In 1801 Henry Case's son Robert (another of my ancestors) was Woodforde's

yardboy and I presume he was included among the seven in Woodforde's household.

So, here we have a catalogue of all Woodforde's principal parishioners, less than two years before he died, preserved for posterity, apparently through his own thoroughness in keeping a copy of this, the first, census return.

At first I assumed that the order of names might be based on geographical location, but it appears to reflect some form of social order. Several of the "poor People" who dined at Woodforde's house on 25 December 1800 appear near the end of the list (save for Roger Sherwood) and most of the "Farmers of my Parish" who attended the Tithe Audit on 24 November 1801 appear near the top of the list.

It may be that various members of the Society would be willing to write short thumbnail sketches about the 68 families named above. We should thus be able to piece together the social structure of Weston Longville in 1801 as it was known to Woodforde. If others will accept the challenge, I am willing to contribute on Henry Case, Widow Case and William Richmond.

WOODFORDE'S LAST YEAR

> He has his Winter too of pale misfeature,
> Or else he would forgo his mortal nature.
>
> - JOHN KEATS: 'THE FOUR SEASONS'

To Mr. Bradby, the last volume of 'The Diary of a Country Parson' was merely depressing, and his readers were advised to forget it. He

said also that it would have been happy for Woodforde if he had died at the time of his serious illness in 1797, instead of recovering as he did, only to endure a few more years of increasingly self-centred invalidism. I doubt whether the subject of those comments would have seen it quite like that. Life is sweet, upon almost any terms; and there have been very few in any era willing to write off theirs in the belief that it was almost over. Invalids often exist upon hope, seeing a permanent improvement in the most transitory and fugitive amelioration of their condition. This may be seen clearly enough in the diary of Woodforde himself in his last year. We cannot say that, ill and almost housebound as he was, he was capable of enjoying himself as he had done in his active years. But he never quite lost his interest in what was going on around him, although only too often he could no longer participate in it.

I must admit that, although I have subjected parts of the early diary, and the diary of what may be called Woodforde's middle years, to intensive and detailed study, so far as his last period is concerned I have been no more than just another common reader. So it came about that, reaching the end of a massive task in which I have made two transcripts of every word the diarist wrote in the years 1776-81, I began, rather in the spirit of the Busman's Holiday, to amuse myself by going forward twenty years and looking more closely than ever before at the diarist's life as the eighteenth century came to its end. Hence the present essay.

I have taken here the last complete year in the diarist's life. This has meant beginning, not on 1 January as with most studies of a single year, but on 17 October 1801, one year to the day before he suffered the cerebral stroke, or whatever it was, that put an end to the diary, and to the life of its creator, in everything except that

he continued to breathe and his heart to beat a few weeks longer.

If, coming freshly from a reading of the diary of many years before, we look at life as it was lived at Weston Parsonage in 1801, we must at once be struck by the dullness of its monotony. There are no more dinner parties; there is no more card playing. Casual visitors turn up, indeed, but they seldom stay long, and we have the impression that they are not really welcome. The host is not, most of the time, up to talking to them for more than very short periods at a time, and finds conversation a strain. Nancy, who had come to the Parsonage as a girl of twenty-two, was now a middle-aged woman, fat and disillusioned. She was the main victim of her uncle's reclusive and invalid regime, and must have spent much of her time in a state of chronic boredom. The poor woman possessed neither the intellectual nor the spiritual resources that would alone have rendered such an isolated existence compatible with any degree of happiness.

By 1801 Woodforde had not done any work in his profession for a long time. He last took a church service on 15 November 1795. After that, he simply gave up, and handed over to one or other of the inexhaustible supply of curates who were willing to do the work for a fraction of what he was receiving, one cannot say earning, as rector of the parish. For some time he continued to make excuses for himself, but in 1801 idleness had long ceased to trouble his conscience. And having ceased to officiate as minister, he virtually gave up attending church. There is little doubt that he developed what in medical terms is known as a "phobia" (please allow me for once to use the term with an exact meaning, rather than as the loose kind of expression found in the daily journalism of our

time) associated with the building itself. In his mind this came from the fainting fit he suffered in the pulpit on Christmas Day 1794, and from his horror of the cold in the totally unheated church. In reality it must have had far deeper roots, reaching down into the depths of the unconscious. But it was not only church he shunned. As his health deteriorated and his vitality waned, he became more and more disinclined to take up any activity except those to which he was attached by a routine of years. He retreated, mentally as well as physically, to the Parsonage, inside the four walls of which he felt secure and unthreatened; there and nowhere else. This was the state he had reached by the autumn of 1801.

*

17 October was a day like any other. He had thirteen fir trees cut down in his garden, which was so thick with trees that they were "scarce missed". It was fine in the morning, but rained in the afternoon. Shoulder of mutton appeared for dinner. It was the day of St. Faith's Fair at Norwich.

Next day, a Sunday, Lord Baynings called. He was the transmogrified Mr. Townshend, of Honingham Hall, his title having been granted so recently as 1797. He had been the patron of the late Mr. du Quesne. Now approaching seventy, he was "quite lively and active and full of Spirits". He came and went on horseback.

Much of the diary in these days is news at second-hand, told to Woodforde by callers, or by the servants. On Wednesday of this week he entered:

> Great Rejoicings to be to day on Account of Peace.
> A Bullock to be rosted in the Market-Place &c.

This was the so-called Peace of Amiens (1801-2), the one short-lived interruption of the long war

with France, the outcome of which the diarist would not live to see. On 22 and 26 October Woodforde returned to the subject, with accounts of celebrations at Dereham and East Tuddenham. At the latter place "the Chief-Director as well as Paymaster" was Mr. Mellish, he of the flaxen hair and the lisp, Mr. du Quesne's successor as incumbent of the parish.

Next day the diarist paid a tax-bill to James Pegg, who had taken over the job of collector from his brother John who carried it out in earlier days. Taxation was very high and constantly rising, mainly because of the war, and Woodforde now paid in various taxes the considerable sum of £10.2.4., more than Ben Leggett's wages for a whole year amounted to. Among the items listed was one which had not long begun to appear: "6. Weeks Income Tax". For the first time in our history direct income from all sources was being taxed. The measure was very unpopular and Pitt, introducing it in 1798, had to promise that it was a mere temporary exaction which would be abolished at the end of the war. The next day Woodforde paid an even larger sum as Poor Rate, amounting to £33. 5. 0. for a half year. The Poor Rate was now running at three and sixpence in the £, an index of the abounding poverty, of which the diary itself bears eloquent testimony.

Much of the diary is now taken up with the fluctuations of the writer's health, and this subject in the end practically crowds out any other. One day he "felt finely", and attributed this to his having "left of Smoaking". Next day he was no doubt cheered by the visit of a fellow parson apparently in a worse state than himself. Mr. Stoughton of Sparham "looked very poorly, and walked very weak". He had to bring a servant along to drive his "Whisky alias Tandem". All he would eat at the Parsonage was "a small

Carraway biscuit", but Woodforde gave him three herrings "to carry home for dinner as he could not dine with us to day". On 4 November the diarist wrote gloomily:

> Dinner to day, boiled Skaite & a Hare rosted &c. -
> I was far from well to day, low with odd feelings &c.
> A dark, wet & windy Day, & very dull -

Two days later Nancy got up with a "very acute Pain" in her right shoulder. As a cure for this she drank a whole pint of port, which "appeared to have had a wonderfull good effect upon her". He was still brewing beer, and buying in quantities of spirituous drinks: two gallons of rum from James Hardy cost him £2. 4. 0 on 7 November.

Mrs. Custance is often seen in these days, occasionally bringing along relations who happened to be staying at Weston House. The squire was away, carrying out his occasional duties as one of the Gentlemen of the Privy Chamber, but on the last day of October Woodforde was told that he would be home in "about a Month or five Weeks time, now it is Peace". One has the impression that even at Weston House things were not what they had used to be. A pheasant sent from there proved to be "so bad that we were obliged to throw it away, the inside was entirely eat up with Maggots". The servants were discontented almost to the point of mutiny, alleging that the housekeeper Hetty Yallop was starving them, having drastically cut down their allowance of food. Still, the neighbours were always helpful. When the butcher failed to turn up, all Woodforde had to do was to send a message to young Stephen Andrews, who came along and "very civilly" killed a pig, being rewarded with "two Bottles of our Mead-Wine".

It was now coming to the end of the year, and the time for the last of the Parson's tithe "frolics" was approaching, although there would seem to have been little that was frolicsome about this one. Ben, sent round a few days before to tell the farmers of the date, returned perfectly sober, a contrast indeed to those former years when he had come back in varying states of inebriety, and one year when he did not appear at all, having fallen off his horse "in Peachmans Lane". The meeting itself, on 24 November, rather earlier than it had once been held, passed off without incident. Woodforde was no longer entering the gross sum paid to him in tithe by the farmers. This was because he now had to pay income tax, and clearly was estimating his income on the modest side, so that it was clearly inexpedient to leave any record of what he was actually receiving. The one fairly disconcerting feature of the night was that Briton, who had in his young days appeared to be almost a model servant, now "behaved not so well as I could wish, exposing himself and behaving rather impudently in making a great Noise in Kitchen by singing in an impudent & loud & bold manner in the Kitchen, tho' not very tipsy". We do have a strong impression that now life at the Parsonage had contracted so much, everyone was getting more or less bored, with the exception of the master, who had in the contemplation of his own physical symptoms quite enough matter for sustained interest.

Parish affairs went on at their own unchanging, unhurrying pace. The niggardly "Hetty alias Esther Yallop" was married on 14 December to "one James Wilkins of Norwich, a Plaisterer". The other servants must have given many hearty cheers to see the back of her. But the marriage certificate shows that several of the young Custances were present and signed it. "Poor old

Widow Case", grandmother of the current Parsonage "skip jack", died and was buried on 17 December. "Poor old Thos. Atterton & his Wife, both very weak and infirm", were sent half a crown. This year the diarist's usual St. Thomas' Day charity, at 6d. each to the poor, cost him the sum of £1. 9. 0. There were not only many more people in the parish than on his arrival a quarter of a century before, but also a higher proportion of those who found it difficult enough to live, particularly in winter.

The Christmas afternoon dinner for the old people in the Parsonage kitchen was also not what it had once been. Only five people were present, a sixth who was "very old & infirm" had her dinner sent to her. Thomas Atterton was well enough to totter up to the Parsonage, and with him was Robert Downing, who had nearly died twenty-five years before from an exceptionally virulent strain of smallpox, but was still around. When the last day of the year came round, Woodforde did not as he had once done sit up to drink "Health and happy new Year to all our Somersett Friends &c.". There was no longer a reason for him to do so. Both his brothers and his youngest and favourite sister were dead, and so were many of his old friends, while others still alive had dropped out of sight.

Woodforde's first entry for the new year includes the words: "The New Year came in with Frost & Snow and with it very cold Weather indeed, which pinched me much - being an Invalid". In fact, he more or less appropriated this word to himself. The next day he wrote: "Very cold & hard Frost, very pinching to old Invalids". This kind of comment, once relegated to the weather note information in the diary, comes to take a more and more prominent place in it. He had never liked cold weather, but now it made his condition worse.

There are also signs that this meticulous man was growing forgetful, capricious in what he remembered. When the miller, Mr. Foster of Lenwade Bridge, came to see him on 4 January, the diarist forgot to ask him for a receipt for the £17 paid in "College Land and Land Tax". He seems also to have imagined that Foster told him his one-time friend Mr. Jeans was in a debtors' prison, although it is likely that the miller said nothing of the kind. On 7 January he paid the servants, all but Betty Dade who for some reason was not paid until two days later, their wages for the last time. Ben Leggett received £10, unchanged since 1776, in spite of the inflation of the time. Bretingham Scurl had £8, Sally Gunton five guineas, and the "Yard Boy", Robert Case, two guineas. The weather grew colder still:

> Frost more & more severe, the Milk in the Dairy tho' the Window was covered over with a Woollen Apron and the Milk covered also last Night, it was froze this Morning very hard indeed - The Meat which the Butcher brought us to day we were obliged to put by the Kitchen Fire, it being froze so hard - It felt like Pieces of Wood, and sounded so when put on the Table -

Fortunately a thaw came soon after, but this caused floods everywhere. "Very cold, very dark & very damp", the diarist wrote miserably.

But at least the Custances were constant in their friendly attendance. Twice Mrs. Custance and her two daughters came to the Parsonage, on one occasion undeterred by the fact that a "very wet & dirty Walk they had", and Nancy had to lend them all dry shoes. One day it was "Master John" with "a couple of Spaniels". Another day Hambleton, the heir, now a young man and a captain in the militia, "called on us this Morning on his Walk with his Dogs & Gun". On 11 February a visitor

must surely have sent his mind back to the past, however fleetingly, for this was the son of his old friend Castres Donne, who along with Mr. du Quesne and Mr. Howes, all now dead, had been the original founder of the old Rotation club. The young man was now nineteen, and a student of Caius, Cambridge. After his father's death, he and his sister had been brought up by their aunt, Mrs. Bodham, another old friend the Woodfordes now rarely saw.

Nancy was taken ill again. She had the "blind piles", for which she took "brimstone and Treakle". Dr. Thorne, called in a few days later, added some unspecified pills, "charging her to abstain from Port-Wine, Salt Meats, all Malt-Liquor, Cheese & but little Butter". Nancy, like her uncle could do herself justice at the table, and it is not surprising that her uncle was moved to write such comments as that on 20 February: "Nancy out of Temper the whole Day, very saucy".

And all the time the diarist continued to go on about the unsatisfactory state of his own health. "I was but very indifferent to day & very low". (17 February). "I dont know that I ever felt myself so depressed and so spiritless as this very day". (20 February). "Very unwell indeed. My Spirits or the Vis Vitae almost extinguished". (21 February).

If one tries to determine what was amiss with him, accepting that by this time he was seriously ill, all that can be done is to come up with a series of more or less vague guesses. This is exactly the position that contemporary doctors were in, and in a way they were even less qualified to make a satisfactory diagnosis, since they had not the least notion of what they really should be looking for. The stethoscope, that basic item of a physician's diagnostic equipment, was invented by an army doctor in

Napoleon's forces, some years after this, and did not come into general use until considerably later. It was impossible to check a patient's blood pressure until near the end of the nineteenth century, and about the same time the first crude and indistinct X-ray pictures were produced. Dr. Thorne knew literally not the first thing about the internal state of his patient at the Parsonage, except in so far as his experience might lead him to suspect that the Parson's physical organism was not functioning properly. This would not prevent any treatment he was given from being based on pure guesswork. Brimstone and treacle for haemorrhoids, blackcurrant jam for someone dying of tuberculosis, and pills of which the main ingredient was soap for almost any condition, were still in order as accepted medical practice.

If we can place any reliance on his own statements, Woodforde's health took a definite turn for the worse early in 1802. The giddiness he often mentions was probably an indication that his blood pressure was abnormally high, this caused by arterial degeneration, the result of years of heavy over-indulgence in the animal proteins that constituted a good meal to the gourmands of his time. As he was the prey of the most unfortunate delusion that, so long as he had what he called a good appetite there could be nothing much wrong with him, he continued to eat as much as his system could take, perhaps very often more than he wanted to eat. Taking little exercise, his system clogged with heavy and ill-digested food, his way of life simply increased his chronic ill-health.

He took a gloomy pleasure in recounting all the illness and death that came his way. Briton's "poor weak Brother" was "in a Decline", from which he died on 16 March. At the other end of the social scale, the duke of Bedford died of a

rupture, after having over-exerted himself at tennis - or so the contemporary physicians said. The young daughter of a neighbour, twenty-year old Amy Clarke, died of "Galloping Consumption", the disease which had killed poor Molly Dade seventeen years before. And when he was short of a curate and applied to Mr. Stoughton to stand in at Weston, he received a very dusty answer indeed. Stoughton was "so very ill that he was unable to do duty at his own Church - in short, so ill, as to be carried to Norwich to be under Doctor Beevor's continual direction and advice". But perhaps Beevor had something which every other doctor of his time lacked, since we hear that by June Mr. Stoughton had not only recovered but looked "as well if not better than ever I saw him".

So life went on, although for the poor Parson there was less and less he felt able to cope with. Young Stephen Andrews, recent hero of the pig-killing incident, whose servant maid had lately tried to commit suicide by cutting her throat, fortunately without a fatal outcome, now provided another service. When the cow Beauty had a turnip stuck in her gullet he brought along a "choaking-Line" which, however unpleasantly sounding an instrument it was, relieved the animal instantly. This rescuing action was probably carried out with greater efficiency than any human patient of the time had a right to expect.

The weather improved, spring came, summer came. 1 June was the day which the government had appointed "for a general Thanksgiving for Peace". There was a church service in the morning, followed here and there by organized merrymaking: "Mem. great Doings in many Places to day". Mr. Custance, however, was sceptical about the peace, plainly being one of those who held that no lasting peace was possible with Napoleon, who had

to be fought to a finish. This may be called the official Burke-Windham line, which was followed by Pitt, hence the expensive European coalitions constructed with English money; but abandoned by his successor Addington. Custance probably took his political ideas from Windham, as Woodforde had in the days when he could still manage an interest in such matters taken them from Custance. As any village festivities were heavily dependent upon the co-operation of the squires, who after all footed the bill, at Weston there was "nothing at all".

The villagers, however, knew how to enjoy themselves in their own way. On Whit Monday, 7 June, although in the afternoon it poured cats and dogs in the time-honoured manner of English holidays, there were "Merry doings at the Heart to day, rafling for a Gown &c". It was also the day when the harvest men were taken on, which meant that many families could look forward to some weeks of regular work.

On 18 June "a reduced Clergyman from Oxfordshire" called, told "a plausible Story", laced with the names of many of Woodforde's acquaintances, and was given half a guinea and "a Glass of Table Beer", although the diarist was half-convinced that he was a confidence-trickster, particularly after he was told that the man's companion had "asked Ben many Questions about me". The Weston House family walked to Church, their coach having been damaged in an accident. At Norwich Sir Roger Kerrison, the banker, was sworn in as the new Mayor. There, too, the parliamentary election for the two borough members provoked "very riotous Proceedings", and a man was reported killed.

The county election began a week later. Ben and Betty, that staid middle-aged couple - the "Farming Man" was now getting on for fifty and his fiancee no longer in her first youth - went

along for him to cast his vote. He was by virtue of the ownership of his little estate at Crownthorpe, near Wymondham, one of the "forty shilling freeholders" entitled to vote in county elections. All the same, he had to ask his employer's permission, to obtain the time off. In those days the polls were open for a number of successive days, a system which was a great advantage to the corrupt electors of "rotten boroughs", as it enabled them to withhold their vote until the last possible moment and accept only the highest offer. Even without corruption, which was far less marked in the county elections because of the high number of voters involved, an air of desperation often became perceptible as the supporters of a candidate who was believed to be falling behind in the race tried frantically to drum up some last minute support for him.

The 1802 Norfolk county election was contested, with three candidates fighting for the two seats. The sitting members, Coke and Astley, both Whigs, were being challenged by the Tory Colonel Wodehouse, son of the Wodehouse whom our Parson had supported with some enthusiasm in the election of 1784, even going so far as to trick out his servants with cockades of the authentic "true blue" colour. It was all very different now. Four days after Ben had been to Norwich and cast his vote for Wodehouse as a "plumper", meaning that he voted for one candidate only, instead of the two he was entitled to support, Woodforde wrote:

> ... a D.r Ogilvie from Norwich came post haste, in a Post Chaise after me to go back with him to Norwich to vote for Colonel Wodehouse - S.r Jacob Astley is running him hard - but I was too ill to go any where at present therefore was obliged to decline going .. It hurried me a great deal indeed .. Dinner to day, Leg of Mutton rosted &c. -

He had finished with Norwich for ever, would not see the place again, although he had had some happy times there, as perhaps he remembered. New and ominous manifestations of his weakening health were appearing. In June he had reported having the cramp in his right hand - a bad sign, taken together with his other symptoms. Now the writing on scraps of paper remaining after three pages were ripped out reveal that he was taken ill with some kind of throat infection. Even after the condition had practically cleared up, on 4 September:

> ... I saw my Throat this Morning for the first Time and it frightened me indeed, to think, what it must have been at first, as it now appears (tho' almost well) very frightfull and disagreeable ...

This must have been some kind of an external lesion, as he writes of "a common Diacolon Plaister and a Bandage over it". He was now sleeping badly, and getting little rest at night. Still he continued to make entries like the one for 4 September: "I eat very hearty to day, and have done so for many days last past". He doubtless wondered why he got weaker instead of stronger, no matter how much "Beef-Steak-Pye" and breast of mutton he consumed. A typical complete entry is that for 8 September, and we need only compare it with any of the innumerable others written in happier days to see what a state he had been reduced to:

> We breakfasted, dined &c. again at home -
> Very weak & indifferent again to day & all day -
> So depressed in Spirits to day made me miserable -
> I was assisted down Stairs & up to day -

Dinner to day, Leg of Mutton rosted &c. -
The least Uneasiness affects me much -

It sounds almost as though he were losing interest in the things and events which had interested him all his life. Nothing was real any more but the sensations of his own ill-health. But he continued to record, at least intermittently, what went on around him, of which he was now a mere spectator. The boy, Robert Case, fell off the cart in which a load of barley was being taken into the barn; but was not hurt at all, much to the diarist's relief. Mr. Stoughton, just returned from a visit to the sea at Cromer for the benefit of his health, paid a call on him. He had always bought articles brought to the door by pedlars; and now he made the very last of all these purchases, when he purchased a whole pound of different sorts of thread, for the sum of seven shillings. Quite in his old manner, he even noted down the name of the "travelling Woman" who had brought it.

But now one disease after another came to plague and rack his tormented frame. He wrote on 10 September: "A very great weakness in my Intestines prevails now". He developed Nancy's complaint of "blind piles", which were probably much worse with him, given his general condition by now. "Could neither sit, stand or Walk without a great deal of Pain indeed. The Pain was so great, that it put me quite in a Fever". He felt cold all the time, although it was only September, and the weather was warm. Some nights he coughed for hours together. And a really fatal sign now appeared, of which the cramp he had noted in June was a preliminary warning. Perhaps the fainting fits from which he had suffered all his adult life were symptomatic of a latent heart weakness. Whatever the truth of this, his legs and thighs began to swell. It was the "dropsy", ascites in modern medical

speech, which showed that his heart was failing and that the circulation could no longer function efficiently.

October began, the diarist's last month. A semblance of normality was still kept up. He sent some filberts to Press Custance, whom he had known even longer than he had been acquainted with Press' brother the squire. Back in the summer, after Woodforde had lost "four old Turkies - believed stolen", Press had sent him a delectable rural present, "a fine Hen Turkey with ten of her Eggs to set under". In this civilized way relations between the two came to their end. Mr. Girling, the Weston House steward, sent the diarist a gift of "half a Doz: Pigeons". But also - "Harry Baker made me a small low Stool to day to rest my Legs upon, as they swell so".

Near the end of the diary, two more pages have been ripped out (5-16 October). But on the blotting paper the weather notes remain, and one or two jottings of the kind he was in the habit of making, after he had written his entry for the day and drawn the usual line beneath it. From a note of this kind we hear that Robert Case must have left, and was replaced by the coming of the very last Parsonage servant:

> Our New Boy J$\frac{n}{o}$ Lane about 13. Years old, came to his Place to Night and slept here. I continue very indifferent indeed. Pain so great scarce able to walk -

17 October was a Sunday. Whatever his practice in earlier years, it seems clear enough that Woodforde now entered up his diary twice a day. The division within the entry came with dinner. So when he wrote as the first line of his final entry the words: "We breakfasted, dined ...", and left it there, he was surely intending to return to the diary in the evening and chronicle the later events of the day, adding anything which had escaped him about the earlier portion of the entry.

But there were to be no later events for him. We can imagine him now; stricken, crippled and in great pain, writing with infinite slowness the diary which he had begun as a nineteen year old undergraduate who had to his great pride and satisfaction just been admitted to New College.

... Very weak this Morning, scarce able to put on my Cloaths and with great difficulty, get down Stairs with help -
M.r Dade read Prayers & Preached this Morning at Weston Church - Nancy at Church -
M.r & M.rs Custance & Lady Bacon at Church -

Perhaps by now he was exhausted, too ill to go on writing any longer. But there was one piece of information which, ever since 1791, he had put in, whatever the circumstances. He wrote it now:

Dinner to day, Rost Beef &c.

That was all. He put away his diary for ever. In the afternoon, as I have said, something must have happened which put an end to the last traces of an active life. Perhaps he never recovered consciousness, but remained in a coma until he died.

On the first day of the new year Nancy began a fresh diary of her own:

January 1. Saturday. Weston. Norfolk. This morning about a quarter after Ten o'clock died my ever dear Uncle James Woodforde whoes /sic/ loss I shall lament all the days of my life. Mrs. Custance came to me about 12. o'clock.

It was a handsome enough tribute, everything considered. For had he, in truth, been so kind and generous to her? He had rescued her from the narrow round of her father's squalid poverty, and at least in his earlier and more active days had done something to see that she

was entertained. But their life together had throughout been organised for his convenience, not hers; and when his health failed and he became an invalidish recluse, she had to accept the change. If he ever spared a thought about what was to become of Nancy after he had gone, he certainly never put any such speculations into the pages of the diary. She was now middle-aged, too old for marriage, and further disqualified by her lack of means. The £200-odd which was all he had to leave, once his debts were paid, was not nearly enough to purchase her independence, and even that small nest-egg had to be shared with Bill. Nancy had nearly thirty years still to live. Before very long she would find herself back at Castle Cary, living as she had always done on the charity of her relations. It was the common destiny of so many women in her time, exploited by the very people who were most near and dear to them.

ANNUAL GATHERING IN SOMERSET 1981

Members gathered this year at Dillington House, which is the home of Dillington College and Arts Centre near Ilminster, and were fortunate in being able to "take over" the whole centre for the weekend. This is the first time the Society has been able to have everyone under one roof, and transported together by coach to places chosen for visitation, and it would seem to have been an ideal solution. The College went out of its way to make our stay very enjoyable, providing every facility possible, with an excellent theatre available for the slide show and Annual General Meeting, with an adjacent bar which was opened when required. Lovely gardens surround the house, and were a delight; there were excellent and lavish meals, and together with a happy atmosphere, all contributed to this being, in the opinion of many, the best Gathering the

Society had organised so far. There are only a few of such Colleges in the country, and it was fortunate to be situated in so suitable an area for a Somerset Gathering, and even the weather decided to change from continuous rain, and the Gods smiled on the weekend of 29 to 31 May 1981.

Those present assembled in the Main Hall on the Friday evening for sherry, meeting old and new friends, and a total of 63 attended. After drinks, dinner was served, and this was followed by a slide show given by Mr. J. E. Holmes, with interpolated passages from the Diary, on "Woodforde's Norfolk". This was a follow-up to the one which Mr. Holmes gave last year on the Somerset part of the Diary, and was much enjoyed by those attending. The evening ended with members retiring to the bar in the Coach House for a night-cap.

After breakfast on Saturday morning, the coach arrived to take everyone on a drive to Sherborne Castle. This had been visited by the Parson and much enjoyed, and it would be fair to say that it was also greatly enjoyed by the members of the Society founded in his name. Special arrangements had been made for a visit out of the usual visiting hours, with two excellent guides waiting to take the party round in two groups, so that all would be able to see and hear well. There was not the usual need for haste on public occasions, since the Society were the only people in the castle, and an exhaustive account was given of the history of the castle, and the possessions in it. Originally the home of Sir Walter Raleigh, when it was a much smaller building, the castle was enlarged when it passed into the hands of the Digby family, and is still in the ownership of the same family, 374 years later. A wealth of lovely paintings and furniture abound, the former from a wide variety of artists, and hundreds of items

of fine porcelain from eighteenth century domestic, to a magnificent collection of Oriental pieces. There are some rare books in the Library, which together with items of pewter, copper and glass, all add to the interest of this intriguing castle, in which everything belongs to the Digby family, having been acquired and installed during their period of ownership.

At the end of the tour of the castle the weather was both kind and warm enough for everyone to be able to sit outside the Orangery, if they so wished, facing the Lake, and enjoy the picnic lunch provided by Dillington House. This was such a rare occurrence in this year, so far, of inclement weather, that it was doubly enjoyable. There was an excellent small shop nearby selling all kinds of souvenirs, etc., and it was nice to be able to browse around before choosing a memento of the visit to the castle, which the Parson had said was a "Dies Memorabilis". This could be echoed by those who had followed in his footsteps so many years later.

Re-embarking on the coach, a journey was taken to the Old Parsonage at Ansford, where Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Mewes, hospitable as ever, had opened their lovely home once more to members of the Society. After a guided tour for those who had not visited the house before, tea was able to be taken in the garden. Every time the Society visits Ansford and the Old Parsonage, further improvements are noticeable, and a room of particular beauty is the now finished drawing room, which those who have attended other Somerset Gatherings have seen in all the stages of its restoration.

After tea, the party returned on the coach to Dillington House through most beautiful countryside - a feature of all the drives taken during the weekend, with excellent views all round from the advantage of superior height over a

car. Later, having met together for drinks, dinner was taken, at which the Society was able welcome as guests the Rev. G. Cooke, the Rector of Thurloxton, and Miss Esther Venn, of Manor Farm, Thurloxton. After another excellent meal the party adjourned to the Theatre, where the Annual General Meeting took place. The Society was most fortunate this year in that its President, Canon Leslie Wilson, accompanied by Mrs. Nunns, was able to attend, and it was good to see them both in such good health and spirits. A separate account of the Annual General Meeting is given in the Journal.

A short interval then took place for refreshments in the Coach House Bar, after which a return to the Theatre was made to listen to a most interesting talk from the Editor of the Journal, Mr. Roy Winstanley, on "Woodforde at Thurloxton", which added both interest and information to the visit to be made to the church the following morning. After this enjoyable talk, the Coach House Bar opened for those who wished for a night-cap, and "so to bed".

A good night's rest, and on Sunday morning after breakfast, the coach took the Gathering to Thurloxton. Again, this was another lovely drive in sunshine and warmth. The very small village church was filled by the members of the Society, together with the regular members of the congregation from the village. On arrival there was a very warm welcome from the Rector, the Rev. G. Cooke, and there was enough time before the service commenced to read a short history of the building. It goes back a long way into English history, nearly as far back as the Norman Conquest. In 1166 A.D., when the Norman, William De Erlegh, Lord of the Manor of Durston, appointed a monastery at Buckland Durston. He endowed the Monastery with lands, and also presented to it a number of churches, which included the church of

St. Giles, Thurloxton, so even as early as that date, the church was long-standing. The village takes its name from a family who lived in the area in ancient times. It was situated in the royal forest of Petherton, of a Saxon named Thurlac, and so it came to be known as Thurlac's Ton. Parson Woodforde spent three months as priest-in-charge, as has been mentioned previously.

Items of interest in the church include a list of Rectors in the Church, which is probably incomplete, but begins with Richard, about 1290 A.D. An Elizabethan altar contains fine examples of the carving of that period. There is an oak screen, priest's desk and pulpit formed in one piece, and is of considerable interest. There are four figures on the pulpit - those of the first three may be of Faith, Hope and Charity, but the fourth is a mystery. The screen is dated 1634 A.D. The Font, which is the most ancient of the possessions, is Saxon or early Norman, and not later than 1100 A.D., so for more than 850 years, at least, Thurloxton children have been baptised at the font. There is an Adze Door at least 400 years old, and adze marks can be seen on the solid block of wood from which it was made. The Royal Arms of George II may be seen on a painting which is attached to the ceiling of the Belfry. Paintings in the tower at one time formed the frontage of the west gallery. There are five bells, rung before the service in fine style, and three date from mediaeval times; and another bell which is not later than 1350 A.D., is inscribed "Holy Mary Pray For Us". The village has 14 bell ringers in the team aged between 8 and 70. The chalice and paten were remade by John Ions of Exeter in the sixteenth century from the melted down silver of the original chalice and paten which were in use in pre-Reformation times. Ancient parish stocks are to be found under the old yew tree in the churchyard, and are a double set - obviously the need for pun-

ishment of the villagers must have been great in past times! From the above list, it will be seen what a very interesting small church it is at Thurloxton.

A Parish Communion Service was held, which was conducted by the Rev. Geoffrey Cooke, the Rector, assisted by Canon Leslie Wilson. The guest preacher was the Rev. Canon J. G. Bates, Rector of Wolsingham, Bishop Auckland, a member of the Society who was attending the Gathering, and was much enjoyed by those present. A number of well-known hymns were sung during the service and included "Hail the Day that sees Him Rise", "Jesu, our Hope, our Heart's Desire", "The Head that once was crowned with Thorns", "The King of Love my Shepherd is" and "Christ is the King, O Friends Rejoice". The first Lesson was taken from Ephesians I: Verses 15 to the end and was read by the Chairman, Mr. George Bunting: the second Lesson was from St. Luke's Gospel and was read by Canon Leslie Rule Wilson.

After the service, the party divided into two groups, and thanks to the kind hospitality offered by the Rector and Miss Esther Venn, were able to take coffee in the Rectory, and sherry in the beautiful home of Miss Venn, and her father, Mr. Clifford Venn. The Manor Farm was once the home of John and Elizabeth Cross, with whom Parson Woodforde lodged in the days of his Thurloxton curacy. Members were able to wander freely round the house and to admire the furnishings and the lovely garden, and were all most grateful for the privilege of doing so. A bouquet of flowers was given to Miss Venn as a token of the Society's appreciation of the kindness and hospitality shown to its members. The Rector gave a great send-off to the coach party when it left the village.

The final drive was again most enjoyable, and

the party returned to Dillington House in time for a farewell lunch, after which a vote of thanks was given to the Deputy Director for the excellence of both catering and care of all there. Another vote of thanks was also given to our Chairman, Mr. George Bunting, by Canon Wilson for all the hard work he had done in order to make this such a happy and successful Gathering. Everyone then dispersed, going separate ways for yet another year.

SERMON PREACHED BY THE REV. J. G. BATES IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF THURLOXTON, SOMERSET, 31 MAY 1981

Text: "Keep in memory what I preached unto you." I Cor. 15.v.2.

Last year, I had the privilege of preaching to the Master Butchers' Society. In the course of that address I made several references to some of Parson Woodforde's famous meals, so well noted in his diary. Among the menus which I read out was that for 17 February 1763: "I dined at the Chaplain's Table with Pickering and Waring, upon a roasted Tongue and Udder ... nb. I shall not dine on a roasted Tongue and Udder again very soon."

Two days later, I was surprised to find a parcel delivered to the vicarage. It contained a lovely sirloin of beef, ham, various other meats, and a Christmas pudding, together with a note, "From the Master Butchers in memory of Parson Woodforde". I could not resist replying: "Thanks to the generosity of the Master Butchers, Parson Bates dined better than Parson Woodforde." .. and I turned up the entry in the diary for 25 December 1782 and read: "The following poor old Men dined at my House today, as usual .. James Smith the clerk, Richard Bates and so on: "to

each besides gave a Shilling. I gave them for dinner a Sirloin of Beef roasted and plenty of plumb Pudding. We had mince Pies for the first time toDay."

So the wheel of history keeps Parson Woodforde's generosity and menus alive today.

Alas I can claim no relationship with Richard Bates who seems to have dined regularly for many years at Christmas time with his parson.

This morning, however, I am very conscious of the entry for 7 October 1763 when Parson Woodforde recorded in his diary: "went this morning after breakfast, for Thurloxton, to my curacy." and on 9 October he records: "I read Prayers and Preached this morning for the first time at my Curacy and read Prayers in the Afternoon."

From then onwards, Sunday by Sunday until 1 January 1764, almost the same identical entry is made.

But perhaps the most interesting passage for those of us who are to visit the Manor House is that for 27 November which reads: "I read Prayers & Preached this morning at my Church. After service, I churched Mrs Cross for which she gave me 5/-. Mrs Cross having got a Cold was afraid to be at Church this morning during the time of Service, but came and was churched afterwards." ...

Reading Parson Woodforde's diary, with notes such as this, and attending our annual gatherings, brings to mind the story of the American tourist' doing Europe in a week. Arriving in Paris she dragged her reluctant son in and out of the Louvre in a brief hour. As she came out she said to the doorkeeper in an irritating and somewhat patronising way: "I dont think much to your pictures." "Madam," he replied, with dignity, "You don't judge my pictures, my pictures judge you."

In like manner we do not simply read Woodforde for an hour's pastime, though many others may

do so. As in the life of prayer, which Woodforde mentions and practised, to understand him we need time, and thought, and sympathy.

Equally, as we read his diary, study his life in almost minute and embarassing detail, and gather together from time to time, in places he knew and loved, we must remember that it should be more than idle curiosity which draws us here.

It is a two way traffic.

Strangely enough, over the passage of time we not only look at him, but as we study his diary he looks at us. We not only pass judgement and comment on his life and times, but in like manner he looks at our twentieth century way of life.

First he speaks to all who seek to examine the past, whether they be historians, theologians, or humble readers of the Gospels.

By what authority and for what purpose do you seek to dig up the past? Why do you pry into the details of other people's lives, whether living or dead, in a way which would be offensive in your case?

Remember many a man has deliberately destroyed his private papers, since he believes those particular ones belong to him and God alone. Why do you search in such cases? The dead have no defence in the form of law against defamation of character or any means of putting the record straight. Today we often complain about cheque book journalism, wrong reports in the media, and trumped up charges. But what of our approach to the past? What of writers of historical fiction?

Woodforde then, challenges us to be men of integrity, honesty and sympathy, not only as we look at life today but as we see it yesterday.

"The dead yet speaketh;" and this applies to

Christian scholars as much as historians. We bear a responsibility for the truth.

In preaching a living faith rooted in historical events, the Christian Church bears a responsibility to the past, as well as to the present.

Secondly Woodforde speaks more directly to the Church today, a church in many ways so different from the one he knew and served.

Many of his critics, and they are by no means few, and even his friends also, are embarrassed when they seek to examine his spiritual life and the attitudes of the eighteenth century. His sparse reference to the details of his prayers and of his spiritual life, far too often cause them to dismiss him as a man of his times, living a worldly life under the veneer of faith.

Yet we cannot dismiss Woodforde in this way. He does make reference to the sermons he preached, and who can blame him if he was reluctant to preach in Norwich Cathedral rather than his beloved Weston? He also mentions being prevented from taking services by cold and snow, and as a fellow sufferer I can appreciate him.

The eighteenth century Church was very different from our own. It knew nothing of committees, organisations, and synods. Then, as now, too often we confuse and judge the political patronage and the administrative system which made absentee priests a reality, with the individual spiritual life and pastoral care.

Even the shape and scope of services, and the emphasis and direction of Christian behaviour, have changed dramatically since his day. To be quite honest, I would love to know whether he said his daily office.

This service of ours today, the Parish Communion, would be unknown to him. High Matins, and the psalms, rather than the sacraments, were his

weekly food. The scope and work of a parish priest has also changed with the industrial revolution and the evolution of Victorian seriousness. Woodforde was educated as a gentleman at New College, Oxford, and such things as theological colleges were not only unknown to him, being another Victorian innovation, but would have been dismissed as papist practices.

The professional and trained Victorian clergy and our modern ones with their Parochial Church Councils, study groups, parish organisations, and their business rushing round doing this and that would be anathema to Woodforde. So too was John Wesley's evangelical fervour, the like of which he disapproved.

But all this is not to say that Woodforde did not possess some sense of vocation, nor that he failed to take his life as a clergyman seriously. His whole approach to life was different to our own. For him the Church was at the centre of national life. The Church, its work and influence, was something one took for granted. Religion for Woodforde was a natural thing; an expression of everyday life. It did not need special efforts nor special pleading to justify its existence or prove its claims. Such things as eating were a religious act - an expression of thankfulness, a means of fellowship, and an act of compassion to the poor. "Thou preparest a table before me." "All things come of God, and of His own do we offer Him."

Woodforde was one of the better parish priests of his day. We call him rightly "Parson Woodforde" and the key to his spiritual life lies in that word "Parson". It describes his position and his approach. Significantly enough we speak of Parson Woodforde's Diary.

Woodforde, unlike so many, was no absentee parson,

no mere collector of tithes. For him the parson was the man who resides in the parish. In and through his person he showed and symbolised the faith. In and through his person he showed that faith is concerned with everyday life with its small details, even more than the great sweep of national events. Above all faith is concerned with people.

Being a parson he showed that religion is a natural thing, as natural and necessary as breathing and eating. It needed no artificial creation, nor exotic experience. Indeed Woodforde would say in reply to Wesley that he never had a single experience of conversion because his whole life was an experience of God. He did not, and could not, divide his life into our modern categories and departments.

For Woodforde there was no distinction between the secular and the spiritual. For him life was a unity, centred and grounded in God, so that eating, talking, praying, meeting with friends, in sickness and in health, were all experiences of the religious life. That is why he talks of everyday things, and why his diary is full of accounts and the common round.

Woodforde's main challenge to us today is to recapture a sense of the naturalness of the Christian life.

He reminds us that we have no need to make excuses for our faith to the modern world, much less seek to justify it to the indifferent and unbelieving. All our desperate efforts to make the faith relevant is uncalled for in an unbelieving world which has blinded itself to life around it, and truth within it.

The Christian faith is concerned with people. It is concerned with people as they are in their natural and daily lives. It speaks to them of the things of life - it speaks to farmers and

sowers, industrialists and workers, housewives and teachers, workmen and leaders. It is concerned with the basic fabric of our characters, with integrity, and naturalness, with people and with food, and with the things we do and the outlook we have on life.

We need once more to make faith part of the fabric of our national life. The parish churches such as Woodforde loved at Ansford and Thurloxton and at Weston still stand, dominating England as they do nowhere else on earth. They remind us that faith should be as natural as eating and breathing, and at the centre of our lives.

Woodforde, then, challenges us to look to the past with integrity, and so find its experiences valuable for today, and points us onwards to the future, step by step in our daily lives. In this way we can keep in memory what he preached unto us.

MORE WOODFORDE DIARIES - NANCY'S DEATH AND FUNERAL

The younger Anna Maria Woodforde, Bill's second daughter, must have been named after her aunt, our Parson's unforgettable companion. She was born in 1798 and died in 1861. In the family she was always called "Anne", and seems to have used her full baptismal name only upon the most formal occasions. With her two sisters Julia and Jane, she lived what may only be described as the most totally blank of conceivable lives, long in years but without experience of anything beyond a tiny backwater of rural Somerset. I am practically certain that Castle Cary and places like it were a whole lot duller than they had been in the Parson's time, for in the nineteenth century with the development of the Industrial Revolution life more and more was flowing towards the towns.

No doubt the three young women would have considered themselves fortunate and favoured by comparison with those other girls who until 1842 used to crawl on all fours along the most minute pit-galleries, harnessed like pack-animals to laden trucks of coal. I only know that, considering their respective lives, if I had been a girl in those times and offered the choice, I should have settled for the coal mine every time.

Two of the sisters, Julia and Anne, were lifelong diarists. The diaries were written in an assemblage of little pocket books, often given as the inscriptions inside their covers show as Christmas presents, and bearing such titles as "Marshall's Ladies Daily Remembrancer" and "The London Fashionable & Polite Repository". They run from 1810, and the early volumes sometimes have delicately beautiful little engravings by way of frontispiece, and a certain amount of printed matter, poems and items of general knowledge. The Victorian diaries which succeeded them are much inferior, and far more uniform; but the famous firm of "Letts'" made its appearance in the 1840's.

The two girls were sketchily educated, and wrote an identical spidery hand, mostly with hard-leaded pencil. Moreover, this is not a case of "the labour we delight in physics pain", for when deciphered the entries inevitably turn out to be of a monotonous triteness which certainly do not tempt the searcher to continue. Even when on rare occasions they succeeded in getting away from Ansford, theirs was no more than a physical liberation, so that they continued for the whole of their lives to dwell mentally and spiritually there. And if there is a sadder, more wasted way of living, I do not know what it is.

Once only do we see Anne taken out of herself, as the saying goes, and reacting with excitement to something wholly new and strange. In 1851,

ten years before her death, she went to see the Great Exhibition. Here she is describing it:

> July 21st - I went with Mrs. Kennedy to the wonderful Crystal Palace nr. Hyde Park, we went early and remained till quite late - I scarcely know amongst the multitude of ? and beautiful things, what struck me most, the tout ensemble, quite indescribable - the magnificent Jewellery, Statuary, Mosaic carvings of all kinds, these quite bewildering by their number & pleasure

But needless to say, she was soon back at Ansford, where the monotonous routine of life recommenced.

Otherwise, it might be said almost that the diary, and that of her sister, wakes up only when someone dies. Twenty years before she went to the Exhibition, she described in the diary the death and funeral of her aunt and namesake. We are accumstomed to think of Nancy as at least a comparatively young woman. She went to stay with Woodforde when she was just on 22 years old, and when he died she was still in quite early middle age. But at the beginning of 1830 she was 73 and had come to the end of her life.

> 6/1/1830; Papa and I went down to Mrs. Jeanes directly after breakfast, and with Julia remained with my poor dear Aunt till she expired at about 1/2 past 12 o'clock in the day. Julia & I returned home after dinner. George arrived from Bath.
>
> 8/1/1830. We all went down to Mrs. Jeanes in the morning to hear my poor Aunt's will read by Mr. Milward. Met my Uncle there, found she had left us the whole of her property.

9/1/1830: Julia and George went to Mrs. Jeanes to make arrangements for my poor Aunt's Funeral, Mrs. Close came to measure us for our Gowns.

12/1/1830. Mr. W. Leir called in the morning Julia, George & I went down to Mrs. Jeane's. I wished to have another look at my poor Aunt, our new Silk Gowns brought.

13/1/1830
My poor Aunt was this day buried We all went to Mrs. Jeanes, my Aunt & Mary there also. At the Funeral were Mr. Warnes, Mr. Harbin, Mr. Phelps, Mr. Gatehouse, Mr. Martin & Mr. Share - Papa My Uncle George &c. &c. We returned in a Chaise.

Mrs. Jeanes was the last survivor of the three old women who had lived together for many years. Her sister Melliora, John Woodforde's widow, had died in 1826. She herself survived until 1835. George was the diarist's younger brother, Leir and Gatehouse were descendents of people who appear in Woodforde's diary. "My Uncle George" must have been a relative on the Dukes side.

DOROTHY HEIGHES WOODFORDE

Dorothy Heighes Woodforde, editor of 'The Archaeological News Letter' died on June 3 1981, aged 80.

Miss Heighes Woodforde launched 'The Archaeological News Letter' in 1948 and it rapidly became an important part of the archaeological scene, and despite various financial ups and downs she continued to edit it until 1965.

After its initial appearance as a newsletter

the ANL rapidly evolved into a colourful magazine with its familiar brown cover, and it attracted most of the leading archaeologists of the post-war generation to write for it. It published a number of major articles on up-an coming subjects, such as Medieval pottery and clay pipes, and there was a notable series of book reviews by Molly Cotton, Jacquetta Hawkes and others.

Dorothy Heighes Woodforde's early career was in Fleet Street where she habituated the circle that formed round Dorothy L. Sayers. She was descended from Parson Woodforde, the eighteenth-century diarist, a fact of which she was extremely proud.

- 'The Times' 23 June 1981. Reprinted by kind permission of the Editor.

CURIOUS COLLECTIONS OF FIREWORKS

When Norwich celebrated the coronation of George III in 1761 with a grand firework display, it was the most splendid show of its kind the city had yet enjoyed. Preparations had been elaborate. In the Market Place stood a triumphal arch - a timber and canvas construction known technically as the "machine" on which fiery devices could be displayed. Immediately in front was the launching ground for aerial fireworks.

On the evening of 22 September an immense and expectant crowd gathered, headed by the Mayor and Corporation and by many of the local gentry. At last the proceedings began. First cannon. Then a flight of seven rockets. Next three red fire fountains, followed by three vertical suns. Then a second flight of rockets. And so through a programme of 25 items. Altogether a most successful and varied display, according to a

contemporary account.

Yet what strikes us, accustomed to the range of modern fireworks, is the relative lack of variety in the programme. Pyrotechnic resources were still very limited. Almost every effect depended on mixtures of saltpetre, sulphur and charcoal in varying proportions, sometimes with the addition of iron filings, antimony and a few other substances. Intensely coloured fire could not be produced until the adoption of potassium chlorate many years later. The basic mixture provided only force and sparks. Rockets and whirling tourbillons could be propelled into the night sky; fountains could display alone or be massed into cascades; and the smaller gerbes and saxons served as the primary elements in compound fireworks shown on the "machine" - diamonds, suns and glories. The display of 1761 simply rang the changes on flights of rockets, cascading fountains and fixed devices.

Moving on 20 years or so, we find that fireworks are now mostly shown in Norwich's pleasure gardens: Quantrell's (just outside St. Stephen's Gate) and Bunn's (at the other side of the city, a little downstream from the future Foundry Bridge). At Quantrell's in 1780, the king's birthday was marked by a concert and a "curious Collection of Fire-Works" - in particular "the taking of Fort Omoa with Fire ships, which will cross the Garden, with a large Confusion of Bombay Muscatry, &c.". This last was repeated in Assize Week, two months later.

Bunn's was even more enterprising. Here an Italian, Baptista Pedralio, was in charge of fireworks. For Assize Week he arranged a glittering display of "Suns, Temples, Cascades, Fountains, Globes, grand Volutes, Aigrettes, Batteries, Balloons, Cones, Gerbes, Trees,

GUILD-DAY, June 17, 1788.

Quantrell's Gardens

WILL BE MOST ELEGANTLY

ILLUMINATED,

IN THE EVENING,

AND A CONCERT OF

Vocal and Inſtrumental Muſic.

The Vocal Part by Miſs HARVEY.

Firſt Violin by Mr. RIVETT.

After the Concert will be exhibited a grand Diſplay of

BRILLIANT ILLUMINATIONS,

(IN THE ITALIAN TASTE,)

CONSISTING OF

Fountains of Chineſe Fire, fixed Suns, Vertical Wheels of brilliant Fires, richly illuminated, Caprice Wheels of various Forms, Pyramid of Roman Candles, Jarbs fixed in various Forms, Balloon Wheels, with Stars, Serpents, &c. Diamond Piece with Rayonant Fire, fixed Stars, Pigeon Wheels, Screw Wheels, Palm Trees, &c.

☞ ADMITTANCE at the Gate ONE SHILLING, SIXPENCE to be returned in LIQUOR.

*** The LARGE ROOM is capitally adorned with CHARACTERS out of SHAKESPEARE's PLAYS, painted by Mr. MONTAGUE, and is ſuperior to any public Place ever ſeen in this City.

NORWICH: PRINTED BY J. CROVIE AND W. STEVENSON.

A rare 18th century handbill giving details of a firework display

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Flyers, Diamond Pieces, Bacchus riding on his Tun, &c. ornamented with Brilliant, Chinese, Gold, Rayonant, White, Blue, Green, Red and Yellow Fires". Though the staples remain the same as 20 years earlier, the steady gain in variety is obvious. A better range of sparkling and coloured fires was available. Devices were more elaborate. Mortars could launch salvoes of "bolloons" (aerial shells) which burst into showers of stars and crackers.

Improved resources gave greater scope to ingenuity. Pedralio's benefit display at Bunn's included "a curious Transparency in Fireworks, consisting of the Emblems of Free Masonry, Amor, Honore et Justitia, Bacchus by Baptista Pedralio, who will change himself into a Cascade of Chinese Fire from all Parts of his Body, which will extend its Fire sixty feet ...". That year, 1780, at least as far as fireworks went, Bunn's clearly outstripped its rival.

The following season William Quantrell made amends. Instead of once more relying on his own efforts, he too engaged an Italian pyrotechnist, Antonio Batalus. To Pedralio's flying Bacchus, the new man retaliated with Furies. His masterpiece was described in these terms: "a capital Firework, call'd Harlequin from the Globe, With a dance of Furies; and Sig. Antonio Batalus will Fly across the Garden with Fire from different parts of his Body. To conclude with a great Eruption Of Mount Aetna, &c.". The trick of flying across the garden would have been achieved by an inclined rope. The eruption of Etna was an idea borrowed from Marylebone Garden in London. This season it was Bunn's that was outclassed.

Doubtless the rivalry would have continued, had it not been for a lamentable accident at Bunn's in 1782. As fireworks were being prepared in an outhouse of the gardens in readiness for Assize Week, the chemicals took fire and exploded. One of the engineers was killed outright. The fireworks were cancelled and a memorial concert held instead. Quantrell's postponed its own display for a few days out of deference.

Not until the closing years of the century did the gardens again compete in fireworks. Both were now re-named. Bunn's had become Vauxhall,

Quantrell's was now Ranelagh, after their famous London equivalents. Both employed well-known firework artists from the metropolis - Mortram, Clitherow, Hengler - and were quick to try novelties. The proximity of the river persuaded Vauxhall to experiment with water effects: "Terraqueous and Brilliant Fireworks ... will be displayed, being of a different kind to any before exhibited in Norwich, and procured at great expence. A Fire Ship will be sent across the Garden to set Fire to a whole Fleet". At Ranelagh the year following, 1798, could be seen a firework on a new principle, depicting two fiery serpents in apparent pursuit of a butterfly. This weird chase was accomplished by causing fireworks to revolve on an endless chain.

That is almost our last record of fireworks in Norwich. Vauxhall was already in decline and would soon give way to other gardens like Richmond Hill above Bracondale. Ranelagh continued to prosper but, with the Napoleonic wars, fireworks became less frequent and exciting. Norwich had to wait many years before really spectacular shows were resumed. And then the days of firework displays and human comets in the pleasure gardens were truly past.

- originally printed in the East Anglian Magazine, December 1971. Mr. Trevor Fawcett is the Librarian of the University of East Anglia.

A NOTE ON BAPTISTA PEDRALIO

The skills of this gentleman extended far beyond the mere preparation of and participation in firework displays to gratify the eyes of the Norwich populace. He must indeed have gone a long way towards fulfilling the eighteenth century ideal of the "ingenious man", meaning one who could turn his hand to a variety of occupations. On 9 May 1780 Woodforde wrote in his diary:

To a Man (whose Name is Pedralio an Italian & who is the Manager of the Fire Works at Bunns Gardens at Norwich) and who makes Thermometers and Barometers and carries them about the Country, called at my House this morning with some of them and I bought one of each for w.ch I paid him. 1: 16: 0

- Norfolk Diary, Vol. I.

The instruments remained in the Parsonage, and the diarist occasionally mentioned them in later entries. As for Pedralio, however, there is some evidence that the accident referred to above put an end to his career as a purveyor of fiery spectacle in Norwich. Possibly Mr. Bunn, infuriated at seeing his expensive pyrotechnic materials set off in a way he had not anticipated, gave Pedralio his marching orders on the spot. At all events his name vanishes from the advertisements in the Norwich newspapers, and is not to be found after the date of the accident. In 1784 he was replaced at Bunn's Gardens by "Mr. Clitherow from London".

Let us end this note, however, by showing Signor Pedralio in full activity. My source is the 'Norfolk Chronicle', 1/6/1782, the reference kindly supplied by Miss P. Langley and Miss D. E. Taylor. It can never be said that eighteenth century people did not know how to enjoy themselves, if the occasion arose:

At BUNN'S PANTHEON on Tuesday June the 4th. 1782 (being His Majesty's Birth-day) will be a CONCERT of VOCAL and INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC. The VOCAL part (for that Night only) by a LADY, being her first Appearance in Public. FIRST VIOLIN, MR. REEVE.
In the last Act of the Concert will be exhibited in the Pantheon a curious MOVABLE PAINTING with which will be introduced a Comic

Song called 'The Broken Bridge or, the Insolent Carpenter', exhibited in the Great Room in Panton-Street in the Haymarket, London, with universal Applause. The Evening to conclude with a capital display of BRILLIANT FIREWORKS by Signor Baptista Pedralio. The Concert to begin at Half past Seven O'clock. Admittance One Shilling.

SOME REVIEWS OF BERESFORD

When Mrs. Ramsbottom heard that her son Albert had been eaten by a lion at the Zoo, justifiable annoyance led her to exclaim: "Summun's got to be summonsed for this!". By the same token, it would be nice if the Republic of Letters had its own tribunal, before which offenders against literary and academic propriety could be dragged. We might in that event see the Directors of the Oxford University Press sweating it out for a spell on the treadmill, and sundry reviewers condemned literally to eat their words in the form of a newsprint sandwich. An agreeable fantasy, indeed.

O.U.P. has now carried out its threat to reprint the five-volume Beresford edition without corrections or new material of any kind. The only representative of British journalism to take any notice of our objections was the Eastern Daily Press of Norwich, which aired the controversy in their feature "EDP Arts Focus". But if the newspaper took it seriously, the publishers all too plainly did not, for their statement about the publishing history of the edition was wildly inaccurate and careless.

Rather to my surprise, this reprint of Beresford has been given quite a lot of notice by

the national Press. I suppose this is in its way a testimony to the enduring and indeed rapidly growing interest in the diary. But, as Kipling might have put it: "What can they know of Woodforde, who only Beresford know?".

Books for review in a newspaper or magazine are handed out by the literary editors to those critics who are believed to be best equipped to deal with them. Beresford's "half-comic bedside book", as I once called it, has never been awarded the status rightly claimed by a serious work of history, although historians continue to make much use of the diary. So, it is given out to what one may call "general reviewers" who have no particular qualifications to write on eighteenth century history. Of the various recent reviews of Woodforde I have seen only three: by Geoffrey Grigson in 'Country Life', Jan Morris in the 'Times' and Christopher Booker in 'Sunday Telegraph'.

The first thing about them which must strike a reader is that they are much alike, and most of what is in them could have been written at any time after 1932, when the last of the five volumes became available. They pick out anecdotes so unrelated to one another as to be meaningless, the same anecdotes which have appeared over and over again: the "learned Pigg", the overweight pig, and the pigs that got drunk, Mr. Pitt glimpsed for a moment at a posting inn, Hannah Snell and Betsy White, who must always "jilt" the diarist. And most of all, there is food. It would seem almost a principle that, if the critic does not know what to write next, he falls back upon listing the food served at a particular meal, never once distinguishing between one kind of meal and another, and always implying that the diarist must have eaten his way solidly through the lot. All three seem to have enjoyed reading the diary, but their appraisement of its qualities is without much in-

sight. It takes, I think, a historian to make history real.

There are, indeed, minor variations to be observed. Mr. Grigson plunges heavily on the purely gastronomic aspects of the diary. "A glutton of gluttons", he calls our poor Parson: "a historically useful glutton", whatever that may mean. This is all the more strange in the critic since his wife is a noted cookery expert who knows exactly how eighteenth century meals were arranged, as we can see by reading the chapter on Woodforde in her book 'Food with the Famous'.

Mr. Booker is one of the better reviewers of our day, although this in itself may be no great praise. His notice is full of a gentle nostalgia, on the theme of: "How pleasant it must have been to live in those days". He fails to notice that he is simply playing the Beresford game of idealizing his material. Jan Morris' notice is written in an ironic, would-be superior style. "Boredom is the curse of the times, at least in the jaded West. Nothing surprises any more ... No wonder we riot now and then, just to prove" etc. If you ask what this has to do with Woodforde, the answer is - nothing at all. There is no real interest in either the man or his times here, only the stale literary trick of using the past as a convenient stick to beat the present with.

The one advance that these critics show on their compeers of years ago is that they all appear to have some awareness of faults in the editing of the diary. Reprinted "somewhat lazily", Jan Morris says. Booker had previously known it only through the 'World's Classics' or paperback edition (does this make him an authority on the subject?) and "is grateful" for the chance "to read John Beresford's full edition, re-published exactly as it first appeared some sixty years ago". But, drawing attention to the fact that

the previous re-issue (he calls it "edition") cost £12. 10s. in 1968, as against £65 for the present set, he adds: "for the colossal increase in price it would have been desirable to have some updating of the editorial material ...".

Plainly he has never heard of the Parson Woodforde Society. On the other hand, Grigson certainly has. He even quotes a one-line passage from one of my Ansford volumes, as an example of the kind of material Beresford should not have left out. He goes on: "For its members the Society has begun a typescript edition of nothing less than the diary complete at last". This is at least approximately correct, so we should thank Mr. Grigson for noticing us, and hope that some of his readers might have the curiosity to enquire further.

Reviewers sometimes take it upon themselves to correct what they know to be errors in the books they are discussing. Not only has that not been done here, but mistakes have been made for which the editor was not responsible. Mr. Booker says of Woodforde that "he seems usually to have preached from books of sermons, as was customary". He has no authority at all for this statement, and could not have made it if he had been aware of the fifty-five m.s. sermons, with the dates on which they were preached appended, in the Bodleian Library.

But at this point I hear the magisterial voice of some member of the Society, asking me why I waste my time and the patience of my readers on refuting such ephemeral productions. "Who breaks a butterfly upon the wheel"?

I think the answer is simple. Vested interest in intellectual things and the life of the spirit is far more morally repugnant than other forms of vested interest. Too many books receive critical acclaim and are sold on the reputation of their authors and publishers rather than their

own merit. The very fact that so much critical attention has been focussed on what O.U.P. themselves declare to be "a flawed edition", and half a century out of date as well, is a melancholy proof of this, if proof were needed.

NOTES AND QUERIES

Crackers or Craker?

On 11 October 1781 Woodforde brought from Mr. Baker, "haberdasher", in the Market Place, a large number of different things. Among them were "Nut Crackers 2/0", a humming top 1/0, "glass Crackers 6d.", and "Crackers 3d.". What were the three different varieties of cracker?

"Nut Crackers" need no explanation. "Crackers" at threepence could be fireworks but there is no mention of their being used on 5 November. However, on 1 November Mrs. Custance with her two little boys called at the Parsonage. Woodforde gave Hamilton (Hambleton) a humming top and George a "silent" top (probably causing a fight when they returned home!), "which I bought for them some time ago". The latest Custance baby, William, was born on 18 September. In Edward Moor: 'Suffolk Words and Phrases' (1823), 'craker' = "a child's rattle". "Crackers" may have been the present for the baby, and misspelt by the "furriner".

Has any member a more suitable explanation for "glass Crackers" than a "frigger" as a present for Mrs. Custance? This was one of those glass objects supposedly made from the left-over glass at the end of the day. Rolling pins, bells, shoes, musical instruments and animals are known, but so far no nut crackers.

The cover illustration to the present issue, showing St. Faith's Church, Great Witchingham (Lenwade) by John Last, is printed here by kind permission of the artist. The drawing was originally made for the Norfolk Churches Trust (Chairman: Lady Harrod), who were instrumental in bringing about the happy restoration of the church, totally derelict only a few years ago.