PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

Quarterly Journal

THE MILL HOUSE, LYNG, NORFOLK

VOL. XVII, NO. 1 SPRING 1984

...the Church continued her even course with little change condition or circumstances. She was enjoying a tranquil and apparently prosperous existence. Favoured by the State and society; threatened by no visible dangers; dominant over Catholics and dissenters, and fearing no assaults upon her power or privileges, she was contented with the dignified security of the national establishment. The more learned churchmen devoted themselves to classical erudition and scholastic theology; the parochial clergy to an easy but generally decorous performance of their accustomed duties. The discipline of the church was facile and indulgent. Pluralities and non-residents were freely permitted, the ease of the clergy being more regarded than the spiritual welfare of the people. The parson farmed, hunted, shot the squire's partridges, drank his port wine, joined in the friendly rubber, and frankly entered into all the enjoyments of a country life. He was a kind and hearty man; and if he had the means, his charity was open-handed. Ready at the call of those who sought spiritual consolation, he was not earnest in seeking out the spiritual needs of his flock. Zeal was not expected of him. Society was not prepared to exact it.

— Sir Thomas Erskine May: 'The Constitutional History of England 1760-1860'. (1875). III, 209-10.

Issued to Members of the Parson Woodforde Society

Chairman	*Editor*	*Secretary*
G. H. Bunting	R. L. Winstanley	Mrs. P. Stanley
Old Schoolroom	6 Corville Road	76 Spencer Street
CASTLE CARY	HALESOWEN	NORWICH
Somerset	West Midlands	Norfolk

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

With this issue, I have the pleasure of introducing a Journal with a "New Look". I think the substitution of a letterpress for the old typed copies from which the material was printed is a very considerable improvement. It adds a professional touch which was lacking before, and I think our printers are greatly to be congratulated for an excellent job. At the same time bearing in mind that when this was tried once before, a great many complaints were raised about the small and eye-trying type which was used upon that occasion, the Society has, I think wisely, chosen a letter-size which is approximately that of an ordinary typewriter. I should be happy to receive the comments of members on this innovation, which I hope will be "approved of by most", as Woodforde might have put it.

So far back as 1971, I wrote a pioneering sort of essay entitled *A Tour of Weston Parsonage*, based upon the diary and the inventory of the Parson's household goods made out in 1803. Since then a great deal of information about the contents of eighteenth century homes has been provided by various contributors, and it seemed a good plan to draw all this further knowledge together into one article. So readers need not fear that they are being offered a stale re-hash of old material, but have been on the contrary given an opportunity to visualize perhaps more clearly than ever before the appearance of Woodforde's Parsonage. The essay has been greatly enriched by Miss Penny Taylor's plan and elevation of the house, based on careful research and study of similar buildings which still exist. Indeed, although both our names appear as co-authors, her part in the article is much greater than mine. We are also indebted to her for the light she has thrown on the family of Mrs. Davie's husband, hitherto almost completely neglected by those who have written on Woodforde's friends and associates.

If you turn to the so-called 'Pedigree' of the Woodforde family at the back of Beresford's fifth volume, you will see what is the only trace of the diarist's Aunt Anne, or "Madam Anne" as he used sometimes to call her; for she is unmentioned in the text of that edition. I doubt anyway whether this single reference is of much use to a reader, since her birth-date as there given is wrong by a little matter of 30 years, and a life-span of 112 is attributed to the lady (!).

Aunt Anne lived at Ansford in her latter years, and the manuscript diary of the late 1760's and early 1770's is full of information about her. It was while I was transcribing the entries for the year 1773 that I became aware of a fact that struck me as being of quite extraordinary historical interest. If an eighteenth century Will is under discussion (and we have seen a number, either printed in full or summarized, in recent issues of the Journal) nothing beyond the bare details, of what was left to whom, is generally available. But none other than James Woodforde was the executor of his aunt's Will; and being so conscientious a man as he was, it was to be expected that he would both do the work properly and leave a full account of his labours. The result is, so far as I am aware, unique in the social history of the eighteenth century. Here is the whole story of the administration of a Will, from first to last; and as an extra bonus, the document was legally invalid as it stood, so we are shown the procedure that had to be gone through before the intentions of the testatrix could be fulfilled. I found this so exciting that I felt I had to write an essay about it. Here it is; and as usual, by far the most interesting and valuable part of it consists of the quotations from the diary itself.

Very much the same might be said of the enquiry into Woodforde's tax payments. In the Norfolk years Woodforde was living in an era both of swiftly rising taxation, in terms of the money he was required to pay out, and of a continually expanding fiscal system, as the govern-

ment hit on more and more ingenious ways, some of them very eccentric, of taxing the people. It is not surprising that, whereas in the early times he had been content to put down the whole of his comparatively modest tax-bill as one comprehensive lump sum, he afterwards began to list his separate tax-payments with the same meticulous attention to detail as he applied to most things.

So once again, the diary provides us with much invaluable data on an aspect of the social and economic life of the time. But that is by no means all it does. For we are given far more than simply detailed lists of tax-payments. We learn about assessments, about the different ways of collection; we even see Woodforde for a moment in the unlikely role of a Tax Commissioner, although it is true that he attended only two meetings. This is indeed living history, if anything of what we read about the past may be called so.

The essay devised on this topic turned out to be too long and too specialised for inclusion in the pages of the Journal, for which it was originally intended. Promised more than once, it now appears in the form of a supplement to accompany the present number.

I have mentioned before that there are doubtless readers who may not care much to know what I or any other commentator may have to say about Woodforde, but prefer to have their diarist pure and undiluted. They will be interested to know that *Norfolk Diary III*, the third and final volume of the diarist's first six years in Norfolk, has been transcribed and fully annotated, awaiting now only the final transformation of print. These three volumes will form a complete book, the full reproduction of one portion of the diary. It may be pointed out that this volume is an exclusively Norfolk diary, since in 1780 and 1781, the two years covered by it, Woodforde stayed at home all summer and did not go to visit his relations in the West.

—R. L. Winstanley

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Members will, I feel sure, welcome the new and enhanced appearance of our Journal. With this issue we have finally completed the process of change from the indifferent style of the more recent past to something both professional and attractive. Printing, binding and now typesetting have been carried out for this issue at the one establishment, the Castle Cary Press, a not unfitting association for a publication devoted mainly to our diarist; the more so in that one of our members is actually responsible for the print setting. The change has been accomplished following a good deal of effort on the part of a few members and does, inevitably, involve increased costs. I am sure, however, that we now have a Journal whose appearance more accurately reflects the quality of the material which goes to make it up: I should be happy to know that members concur.

I write these notes having only recently taken up residence at a house in Castle Cary. The address appears in full elsewhere in this issue and future correspondence should be addressed there. I have made arrangements, however, for letters to be forwarded from my previous address. If you have written recently but still await a reply please be patient a little longer, I hope very soon to have caught up.

The 'frolic' this year is to be in Somerset and by the time that you read this details will have been circulated. It is not possible to outline the programme at this stage but it is hoped that it will prove to be both interesting and enjoyable. As always it is our intention, if possible, to include in the arrangements a visit to at least one place not previously figuring upon our itineraries. We propose, too, to continue the practice of coach hire to transport members, this has proved exceedingly popular over the last two or three years. I very much hope that it will be possible for you to join us for the occasion.

—G. H. Bunting, *Chairman*
March 1984

AUNT ANNE AND HER WILL — JAMES WOODFORDE, EXECUTOR

It is a safe enough bet, I think, that any private person who is named today as the executor of a Will, so soon as any action has to be taken simply off-loads his responsibilities on to a bank, a firm of solicitors, or any other body with expert knowledge of testamentary procedures. He does this without loss to himself, since any costs which may be incurred are deductable as a matter of course from the testator's estate.

In Woodforde's England, the practice was very different. In almost every case the executor of a Will was a relation or close friend of the testator, and his being chosen was a high compliment, because it implied that he had been thought worthy of a position of great trust, and efficient enough to carry it out properly. He had to do all the work involved in proving the Will, and ensuring that any bequests reached the nominated legatees. Where there was a complication or a source of dispute, he had to cut his way through the difficulties as best he could. If this proved too much for him and he was forced to call on the services of an attorney, I am by no means sure that the cost of such legal aid did not come out of his own pocket.

We are used by now to seeing our diarist as a man active in many different ways, however much this may be unsuspected by those who still think all about him is contained in the Beresford edition and regard his activity as expressed mainly in the plying of knife and fork at the dinner table. In the manuscript diary for the year 1773 is a very interesting series of entries which show him in the role of an executor, having been so named in the Will of his Aunt Anne who died in that year. What follows in this essay is absolutely new material. In fact, the Beresford edition does not even recognise the existence of this member of the family, the 'Woodforde, Ann' who appears in it referring to another person altogether.

Anne Woodforde, the eldest child of Heighes and his wife Mary Lamport, was born at Elvetham, Hampshire, on 27 December 1691, "and baptized Jan 12th by me H. Woodforde the unworthy Rector of ye said Parish", as her father wrote with charming humility in the 'Family Book'. She was never married, and at the time of her death was in receipt of an annuity which was being paid to her by "Lady Derby". No details of this are available, but I should imagine that in earlier life Anne had been an upper servant, perhaps housekeeper or more likely paid companion to the aristocratic lady. The Stanleys, earls of Derby, were great Northern magnates, and there may even have been some kind of a tie-up with the Northumbrian earl of Tankerville, for whom Samuel, Anne's brother, had for a time officiated as domestic chaplain. Payment of the annuity was entrusted to Lord Willoughby de Broke, and reached the recipient through the agency of another brother, Woodforde's Uncle Thomas. Here was another family connection. In the 1780's Frank Woodforde, rector of Ansford and Thomas' only son, would be the "keeper", as it was called in that epoch, of the Hon. John Verney, the insane elder son of Lord Willoughby.

However earned, the annuity was clearly a form of pension. When we meet her in the diary, Anne is an old lady, living in retirement in a house by Ansford Churchyard. She was a lodger with a couple named Charles and Mary Biggen, no doubt fairly young people at the time, since Charles Biggen of Castle Cary had married Mary Hutchins of Ansford so recently as 16 April 1770. When marrying the couple, Woodforde returned the fee of five shillings, a sign that they were either very poor or in his particular favour. They had a daughter Jemima, baptized on 11 April 1773 but probably born some time before that date, since their second daughter, Hester, was christened on 2 January in the following year. The Biggens occupied one of the houses which Samuel Woodforde, and James after him, let off at tiny

rents as a form of charity to poor people. They paid £3 a year for this accommodation, in four quarterly payments of fifteen shillings each. The house had four chimneys, and we know this because the diarist paid one shilling and sixpence to have them all swept, on 27 February 1773.

It might be added that the name, as it appears in Woodforde's domestic record, is not one to inspire us with a great deal of confidence. Charles and Mary may personally have kept out of trouble, but the Biggens upon the whole had a bad reputation, notorious as bearers and begetters of illegitimate children, stealers of wood, potatoes and other suchlike "unconsidered trifles", and altogether what the diarist would have called "low life people". Indeed, Anne herself did not trust the couple she lived with, at least after illness had reduced her capacity to defend her own possessions. Woodforde wrote on the blotting paper opposite his entry for 5 November 1772 these words:

> Aunt Anne this morning let me have
> ten Guineas for to keep for her, till she wants
> it, being afraid to keep it where she is —

In the previous year, he had drawn up a form of Will for his aunt. It may occasion surprise that he was chosen to do this in preference to Heighes, his elder and a lawyer by profession. But there are many signs that James considered himself the effective head of the family after his father's death, and was so considered by his relations. As for Heighes, he had shot his bolt as a professional man, long since, and although members of the family continued to toss to him odd bits of legal work, Aunt Anne clearly put more faith in James.

Now there can be little doubt that this Will, in common with most of the Wills for the county of Somerset, went up in flames in 1942, some bureaucrat of inscrutable wisdom having decreed that for the duration of the war those for the diocese of Bath and Wells should be

lodged at Exeter, whereby both diocesan archives perished through the incendiary bombs that rained on Exeter. In this case, however, the document had previously been inspected by Dr. Woodforde. He did not copy it out in full, but made a summary of its contents, some passages only being quoted verbatim. The summary agrees almost totally with the allusions to various clauses of the Will made in the diary. But of course, the latter does far more than merely endorse the terminology of the Will. It shows an executor of the eighteenth century actually at work, and so preserves a first-hand account of testamentary dispositions and the administration of a Will which, as so often with Woodforde, provides a wealth of detail that cannot be matched.

The testatrix began by saying that she wished her body to be buried in Ansford churchyard, near to her brother John, who had died in 1760. The sexton was to have his "usual Fees", and 2/6d. was to be given to "each man of the 6 who carry me". There followed a number of small bequests: £10 to her brother Thomas and her nephew James Lewis, the same amount and her "apparel" to her last surviving sister the Bath landlady, and another £10 to niece Mary Lewis. If "John Bicknells Widow of Buckland County Surrey" were still alive, she too was to have £10; if not, the money was to go to charity at the executor's discretion. Mourning rings, that very popular form of bequest, were to be given. One, specified as to be worth twenty shillings, was for "my great good Friend Mrs. Morris of Greenwich", and another of the same value left to "John Cambell [Campbell?] of "Stackpoole County Pembroke", a third to go to his wife. The diarist, as executor, was "to see all fulfilled and to have £10". Dr. Woodforde indeed, or the copyist who made the second transcript of the *'Family Book'* which is in my possession, put the sum down as "£100", but the diary confirms the right amount which was in any case the customary value of the cash gift made to the executor of a Will.

The bulk of Aunt Anne's capital consisted of £600 "in New South Sea Annuities". This was the stock issued by a perfectly respectable trading establishment which succeeded the notorious "bubble" company of the early part of the century, after it had ruined so many hapless investors. In the 1770's its shares were "gilt-edged", as a later age would call such an investment, perfectly safe and offering a reasonable scale of interest. Aunt Anne's nest-egg was to go in equal portions "to my Brother John's two sons my nephews Robert and Thomas".

Anne, then, was clearly in easy circumstances and not, like so many unfortunate spinsters, a "poor relation". She was much better off than her late sister, Mrs. Parr, who had died in 1771, intestate because she had nothing to leave. It could not have cost Anne much to live at Ansford. The Biggens may have had possession of their low-rent house on condition that they did not charge her much for the room she occupied. The Parsonage was a great source of free Woodfordeian meals. Along with her great-niece, young Nancy Woodforde, she had a standing invitation to dinner there on Sundays; but she was in fact up at the Parsonage much more often than that, sometimes appearing several times in a single week, as the diary never fails to record.

But apart from listing every time his aunt came to dinner, Woodforde says little about her. Odd scraps of information filter down to us from time to time as we read the m.s. On 12 March 1771 she contributed ten shillings towards a fund for building a hospital at Taunton, a further proof that she was not without ready money to hand; although in this case she would have been better advised to keep it in her purse, since the project never got off the ground, the promoters of the scheme running out of cash before the building was anywhere near completion.

On 30 June of the same year Woodforde was stung by a "Dun-Fly", or horse fly, and his leg swelled up. Aunt Anne gave him for it some "Oil of Vipers", a traditional remedy in the West Country. It takes us, as so often when we read Woodforde's diary, straight back to the world of Thomas Hardy, and we remember the scene in *'The Return of the Native'* where Mrs. Yeobright, bitten by an adder on the heath, has the wound treated by oil from other adders.

*

Anne was eighty at the beginning of 1772, and through most of that year she continued to turn up regularly at the Parsonage to have dinner. Often she "spent the Afternoon" there as well. She was still actively getting about in November. She dined for the last time at the Parsonage on 22 November. After that the slow onset of her last illness must have begun. On 13 December Woodforde entered in the diary: "I sent my Aunt Anne some Dinner, she being ill". He did this again on 20 December, and on Christmas Day. However, she was still able to go out of her house, although apparently not to attend church. On 27 December she took the sacrament at the Parsonage—"My poor Aunt being so very weak".

Woodforde himself was leading at this time a full enough social life: going to parties and to the theatre, seeing to the installation of the memorial stone to his parents in Ansford Church and enjoying the frequent hospitality of Justice Creed. There is always in Woodforde something of a tendency for people he is not in immediate contact with to drop from sight, sometimes for quite lengthy periods, almost as though he forgot about those he was not seeing regularly. By February 1773, however, he seems to have realized that his aunt, or "Madam Anne", as he often calls her, was seriously ill. On the 27th. of the month he wrote: "Poor Aunt

Anne is very weak & keeps her bed''. After that, he took to writing the familiar one- or two-line bulletins which often appear in the diary as the chronicles of a long illness. On 5 March he wrote down:

> My poor old Aunt Anne is weaker & weaker, & I believe will not be with us long — I sent her a Bottle of Tent —

This, a wine of low alcoholic content, he may have considered suitable for an invalid. But he also provided her with a stronger kind of drink, as a gift which in the circumstances appears more incongruous to us than it would have done in his epoch. Some time before, on 12 January, he had written: ''I made Madam Anne a Present of a Bottle of Rum''.

On 10 March he wrote to Thomas, the young doctor of Taunton and one of the two favoured nephews, to tell him that

> ...his Aunt Anne was very bad and her Death expected very day, & to desire him to come to Ansford —

Next day the young cousin arrived, and ''Aunt Anne was very glad to see her Nephew Thomas''. Two years before, he had sent medicines both for Woodforde's father and for ''Aunt Parr''. When he returned to Taunton he at once sent back a parcel, but this time the diarist does not tell us what medicaments it contained.

When reading the diary, we are frequently made aware of the widest possible disparities between customs of the time and what we might term acceptable modern practice. Aunt Anne appears to have received no medical treatment—not, of course, that it would have made any difference to the outcome if she had done. Still, she possessed the money to have paid for doctors, but still there is no sign that any attended her.

It is not even very easy to determine what sort of nursing care she received. On 9 March, following an unusually detailed account of the patient's condition,

which includes such comments as: "I thought she would have died this morning—she eats nothing but what she vomits up again soon", and "Her appetite quite gone and nothing stays inside her but Rum", the diarist added: "I sent Mary Coleman to be with her until she is better".

On 17 March he wrote:

> I pd. to Mary Biggen for Beer for her & Mary Coleman which they have at night, waiting on Madam Anne — 0 : 1 : 8

He had collected a quarter's rent from Mary Biggen and out of it paid her back the sum of tenpence: "For Beer for waiting on Madam Ann".

Two days after that he wrote down a rather strange passage, which is hard to interpret:

> I have been very busy all Day with Sister Jane in pa= =pering the little Room of my Aunt Annes for Nancy Proviss who is coming there Monday next, and to set up Mantua Making there — I give the Paper &c.

It seems an unusual time to have taken in a new lodger, unless Nancy Proviss was expected to provide a nursing service in return for a possibly rent-free room with new wallpaper. We cannot tell, for there is nothing more to be learned about this arrangement beyond an isolated reference written two days later: "I sat & chatted with Nancy Proviss this morning at my Aunts who likes her new Habitation very well". On 21 April Woodforde noted that: "My old Aunt has got little Sophy Coles to be with her instead of Mary Coleman who is ill".

On 27 April another gloomy account of his aunt went into the diary:

> Poor old Aunt Anne was so bad this morning that we all thought her dying — She was quite delirious owing I be= =lieve to drinking so much Rum — being so very cold.

This must surely imply that conditions in the Biggen house were very primitive. The picture conjured up is

that of a sick, mortally ill old woman shivering in a room without a fire. Yet we know that the building with its four chimneys must have been a place in which comfort and warmth were possible, if it had been anyone's business to provide them. As for the rum, if Aunt Anne was drinking so much that it made her "delirious", the most elementary common sense might have dictated some restriction of her supply. What we find is the very opposite. On 5 May Woodforde provided her with a whole gallon of the stuff, at a cost of seven shillings.

Then, with the beginning of summer, the weather changed, and it became very hot. On 1 June the diarist wrote down what was for him an unusually realistic account of a visit to a fever patient, Mrs. Mary Russ, when "the Heat & Effluvias of the Room made me almost sick". On the same day he added a passage about Aunt Anne which must have been an eye-witness account, since it begins: "Being in Madam Annes Room..." But later he or someone else blacked out the rest of the passage.

Although it is clear that he fully expected Anne to die, it needed only a transient improvement in her state, however illusory, for him to declare that she was "better", or even "much better". But after one of these optimistic speculations, on 1 June, he abruptly stopped writing about her altogether. I suggest that it was about this time that her illness must have gone into its final phase. This is almost a double of what we see in the diary about the case of William Melliar, who had died in the previous year. It is as though, while he was willing enough to visit ailing friends and relations, and to chronicle the varying ups and downs of their condition, while there was still a chance that they might recover, once he saw that they really were dying he, to use the modern idiom, "didn't want to know". Once the patient died, however, he was always happy to describe and discuss the funeral, down to the last detail.

Woodforde's Aunt Anne died on 15 June: "between nine and ten o'clock—she went of quite easy". In fact, he was not present, although on his way to the bedside, when she died. At once he slipped naturally into the role of busy executor. "As I have the management of her Affairs, having her Will, read the same to my Aunt Tom and Sister Clarke this morning...". The following day he went over to Taunton to see Cousin Thomas. Perhaps to underline the formal nature of the occasion, instead of riding there on his mare as usual, he hired the Ansford Inn Chaise, having made a deal with the innkeeper and agreed to pay a guinea and a half "there and back", with an extra 5/9d. for the chaise driver. The fortunate legatee was shown the Will.

On 19 June Woodforde conducted his aunt's funeral in Ansford churchyard. "There were no Pall-Bearers, but it was a very pretty and decent Funeral, approved of by most", he commented in the judicial manner he always assumed for discussion of that favourite topic. Charles Biggen was an "Under-Bearer", and rewarded with "half a Crown & a Pr. of Gloves". These last, with the usual hatbands, were given out by the diarist to a number of people, including the women of the family, who by convention did not attend funerals, and Dr. Clarke, who although invited was absent. After the ceremony:

> We all returned back to the House & there I read Madam Anne's Will to all the Company & then we returned — Brother Heighes I am sorry to say was quite merry and behaved very inconsistently by talking very loud —

The funeral cost five guineas—"very reasonable", as the diarist commented when he paid the bill from Mr. Francis the undertaker. Five shillings were given to David Maby the parish clerk for "ringing the Bell and digging the Grave &c.". Woodforde also paid him 2/6d. for helping to take "an Inventory of Madam Anne's goods & apparel ... We found ten Guineas in a

velvet Purse in an open Box''. He paid Mary Biggen the quite substantial amount of £3. 12. 6 ''for Madam Anne ... for odd things and Boarding''. Woodforde never states directly that his aunt had lodged with the Biggens, but the last passage can have surely only one meaning. At the same time he received back a guinea lent by Anne to Mary. Woodforde next set about systematically attending to the distribution of the smaller bequests as set out in his aunt's testament. He started by writing to the parson of Buckland, Surrey, for information about the legatee there, and to Mrs. Morris at Greenwich.

Meanwhile a difficulty arose. Although the diarist had made his aunt's will, it is difficult to believe that he could have been with her at the time when she signed it. Again, we know that he said he had the Will in his possession just after Anne's death. I do not know whether that implies that he kept it, as he had for a time kept two Wills made by his friend Mrs. Paine of Shepton Mallet, until she asked him to burn one and return the other. The point I am making is that if he had been with his aunt when she signed it, or had had it available for examination later, his failure to notice a striking omission is very strange indeed. The signature was without witnesses and consequently the document was, as it stood, invalid.

On 7 July Woodforde mounted his mare and rode over to Wincanton to consult Mr. Messiter, an attorney who was acting for him in a complex and long-drawn-out legal dispute he was having with his uncle. The lawyer gave his opinion:

> ... and he says that it will be presented at Doctors Commons, and that a Commission must be held to prove her hand writing as there are not witnesses to it ...

Doctor's Commons was the highest authority for the adjudication of testamentary cases. It was established

in London, near St. Paul's Churchyard, and contained the Prerogative Court, where Wills were registered and filed, the Court of Arches and the Consistory Court of the London diocese, as well as the Admiralty Court which dealt with such totally unrelated matters as shipwreck and the like. Doctor's Commons disappeared in 1858 when its functions with regard to Wills were taken over by the newly founded Probate Court. Its buildings were thereupon demolished. It is remembered today because Dickens made use of it in 'David Copperfield', locating there Mr. Spenlow, the father of the "child wife" Dora, and his partner Mr. Jorkins, who were proctors and did very well out of it. Earlier he had written a derisive account of the place in *'Sketches by Boz'*. Even more interestingly he himself, just on seventeen, had set himself up as a freelance shorthand writer there, taking down details of the court proceedings.

It appears likely that Aunt Anne's Will was referred to Doctor's Commons, which authorized the holding of the necessary Commission to obtain depositions. If this is so, the body must have had more energy and despatch than Dickens and others gave it credit for. No time was wasted, certainly. On 30 July, at the Parsonage, Woodforde and the two Biggens made sworn statements to the effect that they recognised the signature as being in the handwriting of Anne Woodforde. Present were "Heighes Woodforde, Attorney-at-Law", and "Sam Smith, Attorney-at-Law", of Wincanton, "there being no Notary within 12 miles". The last-named was Messiter's clerk. The document was then tacked on to the original Will, and Dr. Woodforde must have seen either this or a copy of it, which he summarized for the *'Family Book'*.

Woodforde's diary entry for the same date rather strangely makes no mention of Heighes' presence, but adds some details not in the *'Family Book'* account. The

oaths were taken before "old Mr. Leir" of Ditcheat, "he being a nominated Commissioner for the same". There was a Commissioner's Fee of half a guinea, which Mr. Leir refused to accept, so Woodforde handed it to Sam Smith. He also gave Charles Biggen sixpence, not perhaps the most princely of rewards, when it is recollected how easily he and Mary could have thrown a spanner into this precise legal machinery, if they had declined to recognise the signature. However, later on the diarist gave Charles Biggen five pounds, "by Madam Anne's desire". This must have been an oral bequest he was honouring, never set down in the Will.

Woodforde must now have regarded all the formalities as having been satisfactorily dealt with. Probate was not granted until November, but without waiting for this he began to pay out the small legacies. The two Lewises received their money. The diarist entered into correspondence with his "Aunt Jenny of Bath", with whom he was on very bad terms as she had taken his uncle's side in all the contentions between them, to make arrangements about the delivery of Aunt Anne's "apparel" to her. Mr. Gay "the Bath Newsman", perhaps with an eye to stretching out the number of his commissions, proposed to take the clothing "piecemeal", or a bit at a time. Woodforde vetoed this and decided to send it all together "by Waggon". His sister's fiancé Mr. Pounsett got a friend to deliver the mourning rings to Pembrokeshire. The bequest to Uncle Tom was dealt with by Woodforde's arranging for him to retain the last £10 instalment from Lady Derby, its exact equivalent in value.

The diarist also authorized Messiter to realize on the "South Sea" stock which made up by far the most considerable part of Aunt Anne's fortune. It is possible that the lawyer sold out at a loss, since what he received and handed over was only £505, although a further £18, being the interest on the capital for a year, came in later.

With the money safely collected, Woodforde could now see about paying out the bequests to his two cousins, Robert and Thomas. They are interesting because, both doctors, their roles in life were so diametrically opposite that they might almost have been characters in a morality play. Robert, born in 1738, was already committed to the pattern of failure he was to follow throughout his life. He was at the time working at the hospital in Winchester, and had married a nurse from that establishment; they had one child. The status of nurses, totally unqualified persons as they always were at this time, was understandably low. Woodforde upon first meeting his cousin's wife said that she was "nothing very great as regards Family—but she seems to be a very good, motherly kind of Woman". Robert himself clearly regarded his marriage as a misalliance, so that he did not venture to bring his wife up to the Parsonage, and Woodforde was introduced to her at the Bear Inn, Wincanton. Not long before the death of his aunt temporarily relieved Robert's financial troubles, he had asked the diarist for a loan of £40. Woodforde refused this, but sent him £10 instead. Later, on the strength of his expectations, Robert got £40 from "Farmer Corpe". Hearing about this from the farmer, Woodforde redeemed the debt at once, perhaps for the sake of the family good name. As he started, Robert continued. So late as 1797 he addressed an unanswered begging letter to the Parson from "Norman's Cross" (really Norman Cross, in Huntingdonshire), where he was working at a prisoner-of-war camp. For sheer awfulness, this was probably about on a par with being "Assistant Surgeon on the Hussar Frigate now cruising on the Coasts of Ireland", one of the more disastrous employments of his youth. Finally Robert became an "apothecary" at Bath, where he died in 1825.

Thomas on the other hand was born to success. After an early false start, from which he was rescued by the diarist's father, he settled down happily as the appren-

tice of Dr. Manley, a physician in Taunton. He had bought a partnership in the practice for £100, half of which had been lent to him by Woodforde and half by Aunt Anne. Unlike his brother, who staggered miserably from one ill-paid job to another, Thomas spent all his working life in Taunton, where he built up an extensive and very lucrative practice of his own. We are told that one of his distinguished patients was the widow of the Elder Pitt. He was one of a large number of successful professional men who put their surplus profits into banking, which thereby became a further source of profit. Thomas lived in a large house in the best part of Taunton, and survived his brother by three years.

On 27 September, a little over three months after the death of Aunt Anne, the diarist settled the account with his two cousins. From all sources he had collected the sum of £517.19.6. Out of this the smaller legacies, the mourning rings and various expenses payable on the winding up of the estate, amounted to £76.13.5½. The balance when equally divided gave each of the legatees £220.13.0¼. It was a respectable sum, in the monetary values of the time, although Robert of course owed the executor £50 which was deducted from his share of the legacy. At the end of his account of the transaction Woodforde added: "N.B. the odd 13:0¼ I quite forgot to pay them, therefore I stand indebted to them — 1:6:0½". But there is no record of his ever having paid that money.

Woodforde's labours as executor were now over. He had spent a good deal of his time over the work, and done it all practicaly single-handed, at a period of his life when he was under considerable strain and uncertain about his own future. He had been edged out of the Ansford living by Uncle Thomas and Cousin Frank, the latter of whom was safely installed as rector in this summer. There followed the surrender of the Parsonage, Woodforde's birthplace and well-loved home for

so long, Pounsett taking it over on what proved to be a merely short-term arrangement. The diarist was falling in love, if that word is not something of a contradiction in terms applied to him, with Betsy White, and he had already tried unsuccessfully to get himself appointed Master of Bedford School. It must by now have become very obvious to him that, if he did not want to remain a curate for the rest of his life, he would have to return to New College and be prepared to wait there until some satisfactory preferment came along. The prospect did not move him to any great satisfaction. On 27 June he had written a line in his diary which expresses his feelings with unmistakeable clarity: "Very uneasy in my mind, as I must soon leave Ansford".

And here in our turn we might leave the story. But there are two more anecdotes to tell, which for the sake of completeness we ought not to leave out.

The first of these concerns Woodforde's unexpected meeting with a Quaker. He never says how he knew that the person was a Quaker, and it is true that by this time the exclusive peculiarities of dress, speech and behaviour were far less distinctive than they had formerly been. However, a Quaker he was, and his name was Christopher Abel. Woodforde found him waiting at the Parsonage on 7 August, when he returned from a fishing expedition with Jenny and her faithful Pounsett. The Quaker, he found, "lived near Box-Hill which is very famous for Box". He had come to talk about "the Widow Bicknell", that friend of Aunt Anne from the dim and distant past when both had been young. Woodforde had made his own enquiries about her, and ascertained that the legatee was no longer alive. Abel agreed to that, but said she had left a daughter, "about 70. Yrs. of Age". Was she entitled to Anne's £10? Woodforde lost no time in discounting that suggestion. "I told him she was not, as her Heirs were not mentioned". We are entitled, I think, to be rather more curious about this

visit than Woodforde showed himself. To come all the way from Box Hill to Ansford must have cost Mr. Abel a fair sum of money, no matter by what means he chose to travel—and all for a mere ten pounds? It might almost have paid him to stay at home and give the Widow Bicknell's daughter the cash out of his own pocket; unless, of course, there was no daughter and the whole story an elaborate confidence trick.

Still, this is not quite the end of the story. If the Widow Bicknell was dead, and her daughter either disqualified or non-existent, then Woodforde was left with £10 to expend on any form of charity he wished. One would not have expected the choice to be a matter of any great difficulty. The diary itself provides the most vivid evidence of the great number of hard-up people there were around. So it is surprising, to say the very least, to find that so much as six years later half the money remained unspent.

In the summer of 1779 Woodforde was back in Somerset. The complete diary of that time has been printed in the Society's edition of the Early Norfolk Years, Vol. 2. In the entry for 12 June he wrote:

> Paid Nann Francis that was this morning — 5 : 0 : 0
> being some Charity Money of my late Aunt Anne
> Woodfordes, and in my Hands, to be disposed of.
> Nann is married and has one Child —

We do as a matter of fact know something of the recipient. She was the girl who, on the anniversary of the coronation, in 1770, beat her sister Margaret into second place in the famous race for "a Shift" run as part of the celebrations at Ansford. In 1773 she had an illegitimate child by an unknown man. Two years later she married William Cooper, of Shepton Mallet. Her "one Child" mentioned by the diarist seems to have been the son Andrew born in 1773, for no other children may be traced to her on the registers.

In my note on the passage I suggested that the money was possibly part of a residual sum set aside for charitable purposes after all the named legatees had been paid. Such injunctions were, it is true, very common in Wills of the time. But there is no such clause in Aunt Anne's Will as summarized by Dr. Woodforde, or in the diary; in fact the actual residual legatees were Robert and Thomas, who received all that was left after the other bequests had been paid. It is clear, then, that the "Charity Money" was part of the Widow Bicknell's original, and unpaid, legacy.

But why should it be given to "Nann Francis that was"? Five pounds was a great sum of money for a poor labouring family. Maybe she received it because of some past association with Aunt Anne, in spite of the fact that in all the diary entries about his aunt Woodforde never mentions "Nann". But if this were so, why did he wait so long before giving her the money? Perhaps he would have told us, if the antics of his incorrigible Brother John had not driven such concerns right out of his head. "Very disagreeable — being drunk — And was going to fight with James Clarke & swore abominably...". We can hardly blame him if it caused the last echoes of a past event to die away into the realm of forgotten things.

NOTE: LADY DERBY AND LORD WILLOUGHBY

The titled lady in question was Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of Robert Hesketh, of Rufford, co. Lancaster, born in 1694. She married in 1714 Edward Stanley, afterwards 11th. Earl of Derby (1689-1776), and died two days after her husband, on 24 February 1776. —Complete Peerage, 4,217.

The dates show that she was a close contemporary of Anne Woodforde. I think that Anne would hardly have received her annuity from that source unless she had in the past rendered some sort of service to the family. It may be that the Stanley household accounts, if available, will supply the needed clue.

John Verney, afterwards Peyton-Verney, of Compton Verney, Warwickshire, 14th. Lord Willoughby de Broke, and de jure Lord Latimer, born in 1738; he married in 1761 Louisa, daughter of Francis, 1st. Lord North, and therefore a sister of the Prime Minister. A Lord of the Bedchamber. He died in 1816, at Compton Verney, and Lady Willoughby in 1798. — Ibid. 12, 697/8.

Their elder son, also John, 15th Lord Willoughby de Broke after the death of his father, was born in 1762 and died at Castle Cary in 1820. The Complete Peerage most diplomatically says not a word about his being insane. He lived for many years at South Cary House, the old home of the Creeds, first in the care of a Captain Johnson (see Diary, 25/8/1789 — Beresford III, 134), after whose death Frank Woodforde accepted the charge.

A TOUR OF WESTON PARSONAGE 1984

The original essay published in the Journal in 1971, of which we hope this is a very much improved and amended as well as amplified version, began by stressing the difficulty of the task which the writer was attempting. It is hard enough indeed to visualize the appearance and layout of a domestic interior which ceased to exist nearly two centuries ago. There exists on paper, it is true, an immense number of details which the diarist over the years set down about his "comfortable quiet, happy, thatched Dwelling", as he once in an unusually lyrical moment called the Parsonage. But much of the evidence is obscure and difficult to interpret. He was not writing any sort of guide-book. Like most private diarists, he wrote for himself alone, with no urge to explain what he already knew well. It has for a long time now been understood that his attention to matters of daily routine was fitful and capricious. He tended to remark on his domestic arrangements only when they went badly amiss, like that occasion when a turkey was being roasted and everything went wrong, the jack refusing to work and a saucepan falling into the fire—"ungain" was his word for it.

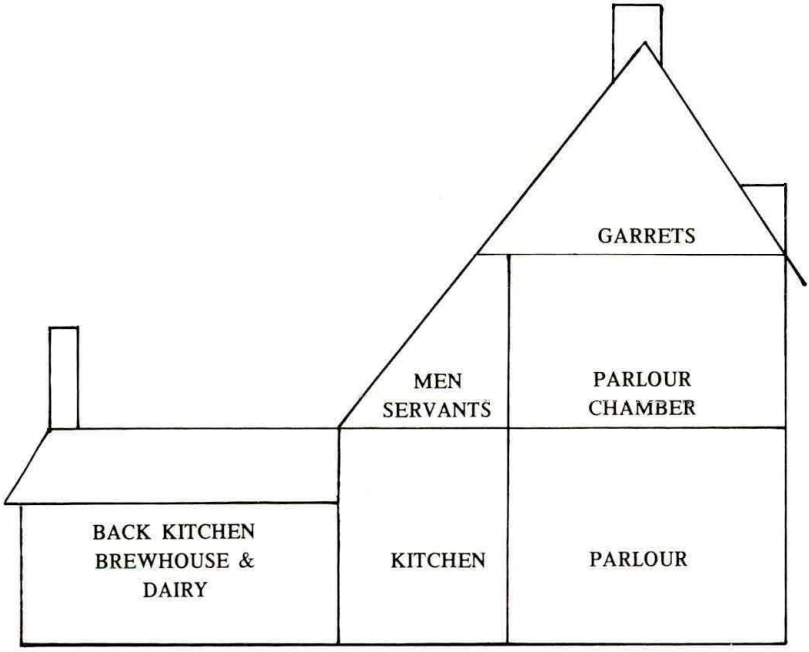
We have of course two quite essential pieces of evidence to aid us, without which it would be impossible even to make a beginning. The first is, of course, the m.s. diary. The second is the detailed inventory prepared for the sale of the late Parson's goods on 19, 20 and 21 April 1803. They are completely different one from the other. The diary is a record of life as it was actually lived, while the inventory is a dead listing of material objects. We need both, because we can use our knowledge of one to complete and fill out the other; and with their aid something like a picture of the house and its belongings does begin, however vaguely, to emerge.

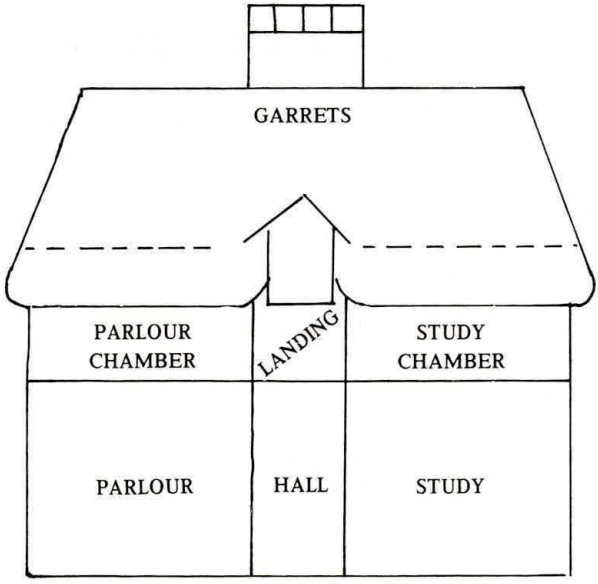
But even a factual document like the inventory, if carelessly read and wrongly interpreted, can turn into a fruitful source of error. The original essay tried to estimate the dimensions of rooms by looking at the carpets. But this must seriously underestimate the size of the rooms. Fitted "wall-to-wall" carpets are a strictly modern kind of furnishing. In Woodforde's time, indeed until very much later than that, we have to suppose that there would be a border of some two to three feet, not waxed (this again is a later style) but rubbed with a cloth and sand, and occasionally a little oil, which would in time create a natural patina.

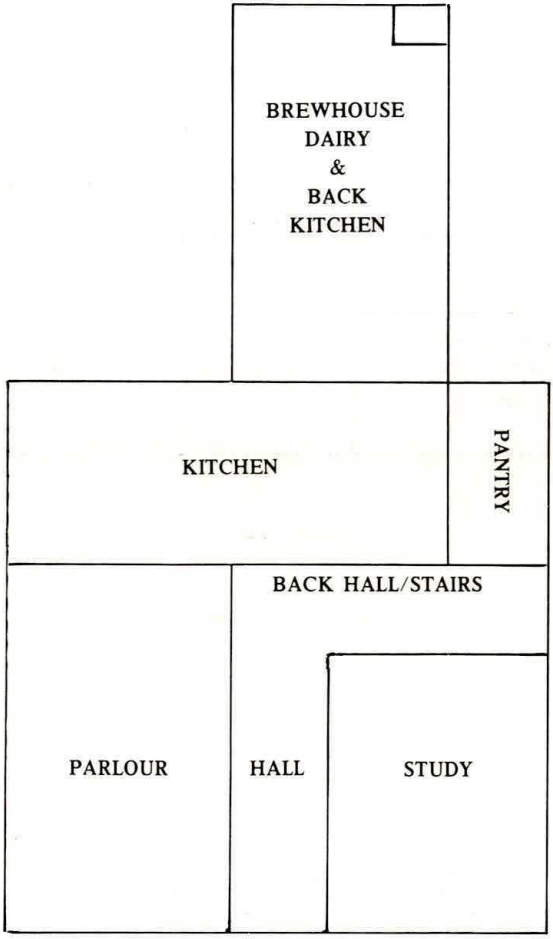
The essay also took it for granted quite implicitly that on the day of the sale all the objects in the house were in exactly the places where they had been in the Parson's lifetime. While no doubt the bigger and heavier articles of furniture were left untouched, it is very unlikely that there was not at least some moving about of the contents of the rooms, perhaps to make things more convenient for the auctioneer's men, perhaps even to create space for those attending the sale. Where the arrangement seems obviously wrong, it is likely enough that some articles had been shifted.

Finally, the essay does no more than make a single casual allusion to the fact that no ornaments or books formed part of the sale, and although there were "Eight prints, framed and glazed", in the parlour, and some more in the study, there were no original paintings. We know that Woodforde had some of his nephew's work, which he had either bought or been given by the painter himself.

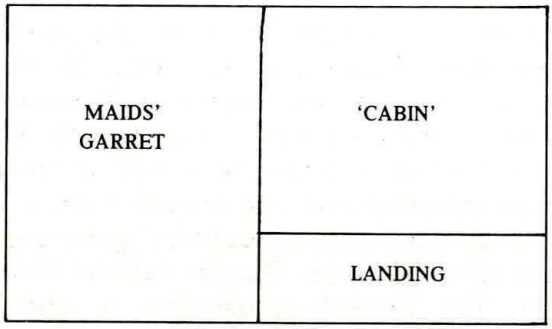
The manuscript shows that on 10 January 1780 the diarist took delivery of "a very curious Cabinet" which he had bought from Swaffham, through Mr. Bodham, "of one Coates a Cabinet Maker". The word "Cabinet" was apparently a professional name for a box-shaped piece of furniture on a stand, with fall-down or double


GARRETS
MEN SERVANTS
PARLOUR CHAMBER
BACK KITCHEN BREWHOUSE & DAIRY
KITCHEN
PARLOUR

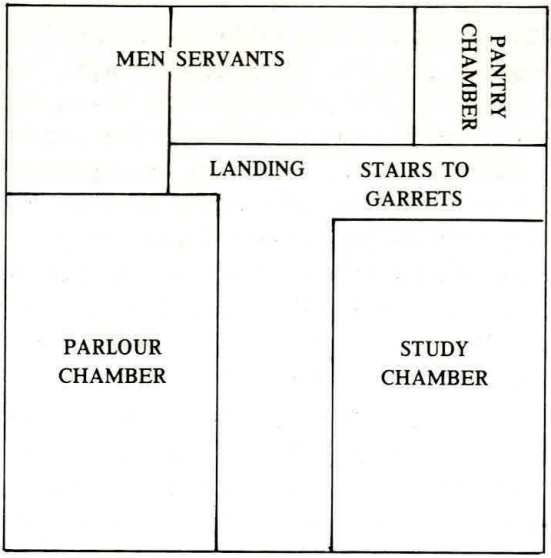

GARRETS
PARLOUR CHAMBER
LANDING
STUDY CHAMBER
PARLOUR
HALL
STUDY



GROUND FLOOR



TOP FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

doors opening to reveal innumerable small drawers, some with secret compartments behind. The English-made ones were of mahogany, very much the diarist's favourite kind of wood for furniture. His purchase cost £8, a good deal of money at that time. He mentioned the expensive cabinet twice more: on 24 January when he paid for it, and on 1 April when he took Mrs. Custance up to his bedroom to view it. She, good lady, was much more informal and less prudish than a Victorian squire's wife, of her granddaughters' generation, could ever have afforded to be. But the cabinet is not in the inventory. The natural assumption is that Bill and Nancy, the legatees, took out of the sale everything they wanted to keep; and this very fact tends to shake our first belief that the inventory will tell us all we can possibly want to know about the way the rooms were fitted out in Woodforde's lifetime.

*

The surviving details about the Parsonage House at Weston Longville are very scanty. It evidently consisted of an original portion, of uncertain age, which had become somewhat dilapidated before it was repaired by Woodforde's predecessor, although the statement that it was "ruinous" is no doubt an exaggeration; and a modern part added by the same person. Woodforde mentioned "the old part of the House" in the diary, but without specifying where this was. It has been suggested that the portion of the house rebuilt by Dr. Ridley was at the rear and consisted of the back kitchen and the bedrooms built above it.

Among the Woodforde papers at New College is a terrier, possibly a detail from a larger map, drawn up in 1822 at the time the lands of the manor were enclosed by the younger Custance. It shows the Rectory glebe, some fields owned by the college and others in the possession of Custance, a field area most immediately adjacent to the Parsonage, which itself is marked on the

map. If the rough sketch of a building resembles something of what it actually was like, and is not simply a fanciful pictogram placed there only to mark its position, Weston Parsonage was a building in three parts, a long central section and two flanking wings which were level with the central portion at the front but some way shorter in the rear.

The house had three storeys, the topmost of which contained a pair of attics built right under the open roof, a lay-out which survives today, or did until a few years ago, at Hockering Rectory. As everyone knows, Woodforde's Parsonage was thatched, and some of the outhouses were also covered with thatch. It has been suggested that if this had been neglected, it would account for an observer putting the house down as "ruinous", for nothing gives that air more surely than old and straggly thatch. Woodforde kept his own thatch in good repair, as the diary tells us. At the same time, not all the extent of the Parsonage roof was thatched, for the Parson writes of a gale, on 21 January 1802, by which "Some Tiles from our House &c. were blown down".

Little can be said about the approaches to the house, which is said, but we do not know upon what authority, to lie S.E. of the existing Old Rectory, built in 1840. It had a long drive to the road, which in Woodforde's time was called Church Street, running from the church past the Parsonage and the gates of Weston House to join the main Fakenham Road. The very large garden is mentioned in the diary with considerable frequency, together with what appears to have been a series of extensive ponds; but all is in such vague and imprecise terms that it is impossible to see it at all clearly in its relation to the house. Two entries show that the garden must have come down to the road or, at least, that a part of the road was clearly visible from the garden. On 4 August 1787 a horse pulling a "One Horse Chaise"

containing "Mrs. Lombe of Attlebridge and a Niece of hers named Anne Greaves of Stibbard a Girl of about 10. Years of Age" bolted with the vehicle. "I was walking in the Garden and saw it". On that sad day, 7 October 1792, when the Custances left Weston to reside in Bath for some years: "As we were walking in the Garden at the time Nancy saw them at the opening of Church Street". There was a gravel walk before the house and, possibly one to each side, two "stunted" larch trees on two "hillocks", until 23 May 1791, when Woodforde had them felled. The word may signify that the larches had been pollarded. On the other hand, "stunted" could also mean just what it says. Two door scrapers on either side the front door had been purchased for 11/- from the "Norwich Iron Foundery" in 1794.

Once inside the front door a visitor would have found himself inside the HALL. According to the inventory, it had only two objects in it: an eight-day clock, which the Parson described as his "large Clock", when he mentioned its cleaning and repair in 1789; and a "Door Matt".

Our admittedly conjectural plan shows what the arrangement of the rooms on the ground floor may have looked like. Woodforde never tells us where the stairs in his house were situated, but it is likely enough that they were at the rear end of the hall. Perhaps about half way through the hall a door one each side would have led to the PARLOUR and the STUDY.

The parlour was probably the larger of the two rooms. It had a Wilton carpet 13′ square, bought in 1793 at an auction, "poor Mrs. Micklewhwaite's Sale of Goods" at her house in Surrey Street, Norwich. The dining table, with "circular ends", which could be joined on to extend it, had been bought with two others, "all of the best Mohogany and new" , from Mr. Sudbury of Norwich, "my Upholsterer", Woodforde giving old tables

in part-exchange. The second table in the parlour is described as "pillar and claw", and there was also a card table—"after Dinner we got to Cards", as Woodforde so often wrote. There were eight chairs, two of them elbow chairs and six with "hair seats", presumably horsehair; but more seating could be fetched from upstairs if required.

The parlour also contained "a Pier Glass 31″ x 20″." This was not what is commonly called a pier glass today: i.e., a full length glass standing in its own frame on the floor, but a shorter glass fixed to the wall either between two windows or beside a single window, with a console table—probably the "pillar and claw" table already mentioned—below it. There was also a "Princes Metal Fender". This, also called "Prince Rupert's Metal", is glossed in O.E.D. as "an alloy of about three parts of copper and one of zinc". The eight prints referred to above were on the walls here. We do not know of any allusion to them in the diary.

A good deal of the active social life of Weston Parsonage was carried on in this room. The Rotation dinners and all the other formal parties were held here, and the Tithe Audits too, although only the most important and respectable of the farmers became "Parlour Guests", a term applied to Ben Leggett's father in 1787, the others being unceremoniously relegated to the kitchen. "Genteel" visitors who came for tea-drinking and social chat were ushered into the parlour. Nancy, writing to Melliora on 3 September 1790, lists with great pride all the distinguished guests, not only the Custances but also the Townshends of Honingham Hall and Mr. Townshend's sister Lady Cornwallis, widow of the late archbishop of Canterbury. She adds: "I wish you could have seen us all seated in the Parlour".

It is plain that the parlour was a sort of hybrid of dining-room and drawing-room. On rising from the dinner table the guests did not go into another room, as they,

or at least the ladies in the party, would have done in larger and more fashionable houses. The card-playing or singing, or whatever amusement was put on, evidently took place here, once the food and crockery had been cleared away.

In the light of this use of the parlour, it is tempting to consider it as the room used for public and formal occasions, as distinct from the study, the private room. But the facts will not square with any such easy simplifications. Sometimes the Parson and his niece were unable to use the study as a living-room and were then obliged to fall back on the parlour for that purpose. The Parsonage must have been in some respects an uncomfortable house to live in. Both parlour and study chimneys smoked badly when the wind was in certain directions. The diary is full of complaints about this, and the problem was never solved in Woodforde's time. Of the two rooms, the study had the worse smoke problem. On 27 April 1789 the diarist wrote: "My Study smoked amazingly this morning was obliged to have a fire in the Parlour and let the other be taken away". It is clear, however, that he was reluctant to take this step, and had literally to be smoked out of his favourite study before he would leave it. On 19 December 1797: "We have been almost a Week in the great Parlour as the Study being subject to smoak all the Time—It is much more unpleasant to us than the Study" — i.e. they greatly preferred the study as a living-room. But even without the smoke, he sometimes went over to the parlour. On 5 November 1792: "...Mrs. Jeans and my Niece in very bad Colds—Fires every Day and all Day, in the study Great Parlour and Chamber over the Parlour. The Great Parlour our constant keeping room now". As Mrs. Jeans' two children were also staying in the house over this time, the parlour was probably preferred on this occasion for its greater size.

But granted that the study was the sitting-room in all normal times there is evidence that it was occasionally used for meals. When some of the farmers occupied the parlour for their "Frolic", Nancy and any other lady who happened to be staying in the house had dinner in the study. In 1788, after dinner, five of the tithe-payers "drank a Dish of Tea about 7. o'clock with my Niece, Betsy Davy and me in my Study".

The study had a "Scotch Carpet" on the floor. Mrs. Cynthia Brown elucidated this term, from *'The Connoisseur's Complete Period Guides, late Georgian Section', 920* which says: "Woven Carpets—some were double cloths, i.e., they consisted of two plain cloths of different colour woven in such a way that first one and then the other cloth appeared on the surface, this producing a thick material with a two-colour design". It was most commonly known as a "Kidderminster" carpet, from its place of origin, but "the same method was also in use in the Scottish centres of the industry". Woodforde's carpet may have been old, or of inferior make because at the sale it brought only a guinea, as against £5.11.0 for the slightly larger-sized parlour carpet. The sideboard which the famous pair of Herculean furniture removers carried all the way from Norwich to Weston was here, but the cellaret brought on the same occasion in the same way is not in the inventory at all. In the study also were a "Mahogany bureau and book-case", a "Chimney Glass, white Frame", and "a stained writing-desk". It is hard to see the meticulous Woodforde tolerating the presence of the last-named object in the room where he spent so much of his time. There was no dining-table in this room at the time of the sale, an indication perhaps that this was never a room used regularly for meals. Among the articles of furniture in the study were "Mahogany tea chest and tea canister" and "Three tea canisters and spice boxes", reminding us that a prudent housewife did not allow servants free access to expensive tea and spices,

but kept these fragrant luxuries securely under lock and key.

There was an item described as "Mahogany tristram" which, together with a "copper coal shoot", was bought by a Mr. Rump for a total of 15/-. A tristram was "a double tripod with six legs, so placed that it always rests on three legs" 1805—O.E.D. An alternative name was "Iron Cat", which suggests that it was a heating device made of iron to be stood in hot embers in a hearth. Miss Bertha Fügl, who traced this, also suggests that Woodforde's mahogany tristram was a parlour version used as a plate-warmer.

We might at this point stop a moment and consider one or two points which have emerged so far from our study of these two rooms. Although Woodforde dealt with an "Upholsterer", what he seems not to have bought from him or anyone else was upholstered furniture. No form of "easy chair" is mentioned. In fact, chairs with padded backs and arms appear not to have been much in evidence between the end of the seventeenth century and the Regency period. But here again, we do not know what may have been removed before the sale, and if Uncle James had possessed a favourite armchair, niece or nephew could well have wanted to have it as a keepsake.

Then there is the question of the omnipresent "Mohogany", as Woodforde always spelled the word. Here the original essay went wrong, in suggesting that the diarist's taste in furniture was to prefer the kind he had been familiar with in his father's house when he was a boy. In fact this is not so. The heavy import tax on mahogany was taken off in 1721, and furniture made of that wood became fashionable from 1750 onwards. Woodforde's furniture was most likely to have consisted of country versions made by provincial craftsmen from pattern books published by Chippendale, Sheraton and others. These articles were simpler and more sturdily

made than the London examples, but at the same time very graceful and well-proportioned. As for the furniture in his father's house earlier in the century, this is most likely to have been oak.

We have now at least an approximate notion of the uses to which these two principal rooms were put, and what was in them. About the remainder of the ground floor there is much less satisfactory information. The KITCHEN must have been large, for this was in many respects the heart of the building, so much being made or cooked here which our age does not attempt to produce at home. Woodforde mentions the kitchen often in the diary and the back kitchen occasionally, but the inventory does not recognise a back kitchen as a separate room. We take it, therefore, that the two consisted of one large and undivided space, taking up perhaps as much as a third of the ground floor area. There was a back door which opened directly on to the yard at the back of the house, and visitors are often shown in the diary as approaching it from this direction. For example, Betsy Davie and Mr. Walker rode straight up to the kitchen door on 29 April 1789. Both the kitchen and the back kitchen had a chimney and fireplace, as we see from the diary entry for 12 August 1797, when both chimneys were swept. In November of that year, part of the wall of the back kitchen was found to be on the point of collapse.

The inventory shows the kitchen to have been well appointed, and its contents made up 51 separate lots, many of them with more than one item. Here were the "Servants' Table, Form and Bench", at which Ben and Betty, Sally and Briton, and all their predecessors, must have gathered at meal-times, and the ancients sat at their charity dinner on Christmas afternoon. They brought in only 8/- at the sale. Most of the lots consisted of implements and household utensils. There was even a special knife for sausages, which would of

course have been made there. A Mr. Stimson bought the sausage knife, together with a spit and a "baster", for three shillings the lot, which sounds like quite a good buy. On the other hand, he paid the large sum of £3.12.0 for "a most excellent jack, brass pulleys &c.". Among the kitchen effects was "a pair of small pistols". We know that Woodforde bought these, soon after his arrival in Norfolk, from a "toy shop". In his day this term meant a shop which sold novelties, not necessarily playthings for children. It has been suggested that they were not real pistols, but pocket flasks in the shape of firearms, similar to one he bought when he was an undergraduate at New College. But in that case, it is difficult to see why there should be two of them, while pistols were always sold in pairs—a "brace of pistols". The dram bottles, too, were meant for riders, and Woodforde, although he still rode in his first Norfolk years, was not long before he renounced the practice. The pistols, real or not, could not have been considered as very effective, since they went for a mere 3/6d. the pair.

*

The PANTRY, where the food was kept, adjoined the kitchen. Perhaps it may have lain between the kitchen and the reception rooms, but would have no connection with them. There was a STORE ROOM, almost certainly an integral part of the house. It may even have been identical with what Woodforde called the back kitchen. Its contents, largely china, glassware, cutlery and other articles associated with the preparation of food, brought in over £17 at the sale. Among these were "Two bread baskets and two beer jugs", knocked down for three shillings to Press Custance, here called "Mr. Custins". The BREWHOUSE may have been either a part of the house or a separate building. It contained exactly what one would expect: barrels and tubs and "keelers", and a forty-gallon copper in which the Par-

son used to brew his beer. This was bought by the incoming rector.

If the brewhouse were an outbuilding, it was the only one of these to be listed separately in the inventory. The heterogeneous contents of all the others were thrown together into a single category and labelled "Outside Effects". The sale value of these came to £160 out of a total of £437. There was a byre or "beast house", inside which "Polled Cow—Polly" and "Ditto —Beauty", "Ditto—Sally and calf" and an unnamed five-guinea heifer added at the last moment, all lived. There was a stable which sheltered the "Useful horse" and "Do. mare". The male horse was the well-known and patriotically named "Rodney" of the diary; although he may have been still "useful", he was old and blind. The mare was named Jenny, a successor to a former animal of the same name who was shot in 1797 after she had grown too old to "eat Hay". There was a barn where the crops from the rectory glebe and other fields were stored, and where Tim Tooley slept on the night before he ran away to "go for a soldier". A cart-shed, newly built in 1797, held the four assorted carts belonging to the Parson. Here "a strange kind of Dog of the Badger kind" was found one morning in 1801—a "dacshund" in fact, not the pet of today but a larger, fiercer animal actually kept for hunting badgers. There may have been other sheds which stored the bulk of the farm and garden equipment, among which was a "Turnip Sledge", for carting farm produce, but with runners instead of wheels. Ben Leggett turned up at the sale, and bought one item only, some "Thillar's harness"; that is, the harness for the shaft horse of a team. He had by that time certainly left the Parsonage, Nancy Woodforde having paid him and the other servants off, back in January, not much more than a fortnight after the Parson's death. They were not, at least officially, paid for the seventeen days which elapsed between the two events. There is much pathos in the bare accounts

we find in the lists. Perhaps out of a dusty corner where it had been thrown someone dragged the "Fishing Tackling" with which the poor Parson had had such pleasure in the days before his illnesses caught up with him. It went to a stranger for only five shillings.

This about completes our survey of the ground floor; so, in the words of the baser sort of guide-book, we "retrace our steps", back through the kitchen. We are assuming that there was a door from the kitchen through into the hall, and that by the side of it the main staircase would run off. It was probably what used to be called "a pair of stairs", with a turn half way up forming a small landing. Here, very likely, on the staircase, stood the "bracket clock, with chimes, on mahogany bracket". Mr. Girling bought it for three guineas.

We can at once identify three rooms on the first floor, as the STUDY CHAMBER, PARLOUR CHAMBER and PANTRY CHAMBER, so called because they were built directly over the corresponding rooms downstairs. In Woodforde's time the word "Chamber" always denoted a bedroom. He never, so far as we are aware, used the term, "Pantry Chamber" in the diary and, as will be seen, it was never utilized for sleeping purposes. There were in fact only two real bedrooms on this floor, apart from those occupied by some of the servants, which we must look at later. So, when guests stayed overnight a certain amount of "doubling up" became necessary. A number of passages, taken both from the early Weston diary and that of the later period, shows how this was done at different times; and incidentally makes it possible for us to ascertain the usual sleeping arrangements at the Parsonage.

The first relevant passage is dated 16 May 1778. Mr. and Mrs. Pounsett had come on a visit, their only one. The diarist wrote: "They slept in my yellow Chamber, and Cousin Lewis and Bill slept up in the garrett over my Chamber". Now Lewis had been at Weston Parson-

age since 24 April, and had begun his stay by sleeping with Bill in the "yellow Chamber". Plainly this was Bill's usual room. Woodforde himself occupied the only other bedroom on that floor.

The next entry deals with the events of 23 December in the same year. It was a Rotation Day, and the Parson had an unwontedly large number of guests in his house. He lists them as: "...Mr. Du Quesne, Mr. and Mrs. Howes, Mr. Bodham, Mrs. Davy's two Children Betsy and Nunn, Mr. and Miss Donne, and their Cousin a little Boy named Charles Donne of London". Beresford misread part of this passage and transcribed it as "Mrs. Davy and children", which has always led readers to suppose that Woodforde forgot to put down where she slept, unlikely in view of his meticulousness and the fact that he was greatly attracted by the widow just at this time. In fact she was not there.

All had dinner and stayed the afternoon at the Parsonage. In the evening it grew very dark and wet. At ten o'clock Mr. du Quesne insisted upon going home, although his host pressed him to stay. The diary shows him, incidentally, as a hardy old gentleman, and far less a slave to the vagaries of the weather than most of his contemporaries. Supper was in normal circumstances an early evening meal; but as the diarist makes it clear that it was not put on until after Mr. du Quesne had left, it was served for once unusually late. Woodforde provided what reads like a very indigestible spread, for that time of night: "a couple of Rabbitts rosted smothered in Onions, some hash Mutton, and some rosted Potatoes". Hot suppers were very rarely provided, even by the most hospitable of party hosts, for it meant that the servants would have had to cook twice in a day, no joke with the kind of facilities available to cooks then. After the meal no-one, at least among the adults, must have felt much like sleeping, so they did not go to bed until two in the morning. Obvi-

ously the resources of the Parsonage were strained to the limit to accommodate so large a number of guests. Mr. Bodham, Castres Donne and Woodforde himself solved the problem by not going to bed at all. They sat up all night playing cards, and at six in the morning, as fresh as paint, they were serenading the sleepers with "our best on a Hautboy". As for them: "Mr. and Mrs. Howes went to Bed in my Bedroom ... Miss Donne, Betsy and Nunn Davis [sic] slept together in the Yellow Room, Mr. Donne's Nephew ["Cousin" is meant] slept in Will's Room with Mr. Donne's Man Charles. All my Folks sat up".

Let us defer an explanation of what precisely is meant by "Will's Room". We note that the "Yellow Room" crops up again. Bill had now left the Parsonage and this room was a spare.

The next of our entries could in 1971 have been read only through the manuscript, but is included in the Society's edition of the Norfolk Diary, Vol II. It deals with the arrival of Nancy, together with Woodforde's eldest sister and her son, all from Somerset. On 13 October 1779 he noted: "Sister Clarke & Nancy slept in the great Parlour Chamber & Sam in the Garrett over me".

The remaining passages we need come from later parts of the diary. Late in 1789 the Parson, just returned from the West country, was expecting a return visit from Brother John, his wife Melliora and her sister, the widowed Mrs. Richard Clarke. A month before the visitors arrived, on 7 October, he wrote: "...Very busy all the Morning in putting up a four post Bedstead in the Garret over my Room, to be ready for our Somerset Friends this Winter—To John Greaves for altering the same pd. 0:5:0". Afterwards he described the sleeping arrangements in these words: "My Brother and Wife slept in the Parlour Chamber, Mrs. R. Clarke and Nancy in the Attic Chamber over the study, being much

altered''. A letter from Nancy to Melliora in the following year comments on the stay, mentions her ''bedfellow'' and adds the information that the room where they slept had been called ''the Cabin'' by the two women.

The last of the relevant entries may be read in the printed diary under 1 November 1792. Mr. Jeans went to London on that day, Woodforde having rashly promised to take in Mrs. Jeans, her daughters Mary and the baby Caroline, and the nursemaid, until the husband returned, which turned out to be later than anyone had expected. The arrangement was this: ''Mrs. Jeans slept with Nancy in the best Chamber, with Miss Jeans on a Mattress on the floor of the same Room, and the youngest about 7. Months old with her Nurse, Susan Harrison in the Attic Chamber''.

We may now briefly summarize what we have learned from these entries. The ''Yellow Room'', the ''best Chamber'', and the ''great Parlour Chamber'', were one and the same. It was Bill's room, later Nancy's. Identification here is made certain by the fact that the inventory lists among the items in the parlour chamber a ''four post bedstead, yellow furniture'' (or, as we should say, ''bed hangings'') and ''yellow window curtains''. The Parson, who never after 1778 gave up his own room, slept in the smaller apartment over the study, presumably because he preferred it, although if he had been married he would no doubt have occupied the other, the ''master bedroom''. Some of these arrangements, notably those made to accommodate the Jeans family, seem rather odd and uncomfortable, in view of the fact that there was a third room on the upper floor, the so-called ''pantry chamber''. But a glance at the listed contents of this room is enough to show that it was not a bedchamber, but a store room for odds and ends. There was no bed in it. On the other hand, in 1803 it contained such articles as an ironing board and

"tressels", as well as a "Wainscot bureau". This bureau could have been village work superseded by more fashionable bureaux and relegated to a box-room, the use to which the pantry chamber had clearly been put.

So it is plain that, if extra sleeping accommodation were ever needed, it could be found only on the next floor up, in what Woodforde called the "Attic Storey". What at first sight appears ambiguous, the mention in the 1789 passage of the "Attic Chamber over the Study" becomes clear enough with a little thought. This could not possibly have meant the Study Chamber where, as we saw, Woodforde himself slept. It must then signify the room over this again. In other words, it was the "Garrett over me" of the 1779 passage, and the "Garret over my Room" of the entry dated 7 November 1789.

But the attic was traditionally the sleeping place of the servants belonging to a household. Where did the Parsonage servants sleep, both males and females? Once again the inventory is consulted, and does not let us down. It shows two rooms marked down as "Attic No. 6" and "Attic No. 7". These were fitted up quite differently from each other. No. 7 contained a "servants' bedstead" and a certain amount of recognisable bedroom paraphernalia. No. 6, on the other hand, housed a "four post bedstead, crimson check furniture". But at the same time it contained a number of articles not usually found in inhabited bedrooms. For example, there was yet another dining-table, and "six rush seated chairs".

Now I cannot believe that Parson Woodforde, who plainly considered he had done well by his girls in giving them five guineas a year and their keep (and that was the top wage for any of his women servants), would ever have laid himself open to the charge of providing what Sir John Hawkins called "ostentatious bounty" to servants by offering them a room each. It is far more

likely that both maids slept together in one double bed —the position of the apostrophe in "servants' bed" really proves that—in Attic No. 7, while Attic No. 6 was mainly a receptacle for old furniture, but could be adapted whenever required, either for guests or their servants. We see this actually being done on 7 October 1789, and the expression "lately much altered" seems not to imply major structural changes made to the room, but merely some incidental alterations to the bed while it was being erected. This was almost certainly the "Cabin" for Nancy and Patty Clarke in 1789 and 1790, and the room where Susan the nursemaid slept with her small charge in 1792.

Now we have some idea of what these attics may have looked like. At Hockering Rectory, a house of three storeys like Weston Parsonage, the attics survive, or at least did so until a few years ago, in a totally unaltered state. Access to them was gained from the first floor by a rough staircase which was no more than a fixed ladder. At the top was a little square, and at each side was a room, right under the open roof. It is impossible to imagine anything more rough and primitive. Of course, these Hockering attics had when they were visited by members of the Society in all probability not been used as bedrooms for many years, while at Weston something must have been done, at least to the "Cabin", to make it habitable by eighteenth century standards of comfort.

Bearing in mind that one of our queries is still unanswered—what and where was "Will's Room?"—we now turn our attention to the male servants. The inventory lists "Manservant's room No. 15" and "Room adjoining". The question is—were these rooms on the first floor, with the main bedrooms, or on the second, along with the two attics or garrets? One would have expected them too to be labelled "attics", if they had shared a floor with Nos. 6 and 7. And four attics in a house of

that size would seem a very top-heavy arrangement of room-space. If they were all crowded together on the top storey, each of them must have been very small. Also, would it have been a sensible plan, in a clergyman's house, to locate both men and women servants on the same floor, so near to one another? But what must seem practically irrefutable evidence comes from the story of Bill and Sukey, not even known when the essay first appeared. That early morning visit about which the young man confessed to his uncle could not have been possible but for the fact that, once the other maid had got up and left the room, Sukey was quite alone at the top of the house.

There were, as we know, three male servants: Ben, Will (after 1785, Briton) and the boy of the moment. No. 15 contained two items both specifically labelled "servants' bed and bedding". It is true that there was a certain amount of lumber in this room. Most disconcertingly, it contained a "Flour binn, with 5 partitions". Always assuming that this surely quite large and bulky object was there in the time when the room was actually occupied, No. 15 must have been of a fair size.

The "Room adjoining", on the other hand, held one "tent"—or what we should call a "camp"—bed, and an extraordinary collection of junk, including a "Garden Ladder", a "Copper Boiler", an "Unchoaking rope and wheat skep" and a "Parcel of Chaise Harness". Although it is hard to imagine anyone actually being able to sleep surrounded by such a heterogeneous Old Curiosity Shop of miscellaneous articles, it is also unlikely that, if they were merely to be stored somewhere for the duration of the sale, anyone would have taken the trouble of lugging them up to a bedroom. The articles are mostly of what one may call outdoor use, and more easily associated with Ben than with the other servants. But we know anyway that this was Ben's room. Let our diarist give us the proof, from his entry of 25 August 1778:

... Ben went to help Stephen
Andrew's Men at Harvest, came home in the Evening
in Liquor, and at 11. o'clock after I got up to
my Room to go to bed, I heard my little Puppey cry
much, and therefore I went down to see what was
the matter with him and he had got his Head between
the Pales by the Garden Gate and could not get back
again, I released him and carried him towards the
back door and there I saw a Light burning in Ben's
Room, upon that I walked up into his Room and there
saw him laying flat upon his Back asleep with his
Cloaths on and the Candle burning on the Table —
I waked him, made him put out the Candle and talked
to him a little on it, but not much as he was not in
a Capacity of understanding but little —
I was very uneasy to see things go so badly —

There is hardly a more vivid scene in the whole extent of the diary. But what it shows, without the possibility of doubt, is that Ben slept alone in that room. It was late at night, but there is no mention of another servant being in bed there. The other room, No. 15, must have been occupied at the time by Will and the boy, and is therefore to be identified with "Will's Room" alluded to in the passage dated 23 November 1778. The fact that Woodforde could see a light in Ben's room from a point near the back door naturally implies that the room was at the rear of the house, as must also have been the other manservants' room, if it adjoined this. They were on the first floor, but separated from the other bedrooms by being built out over the kitchen and perhaps the back kitchen.

We might at this point ask one question which, perhaps, ought to have been asked before. The first thing a visitor does, I fancy, upon entering a strange house, is to look at the walls. Let us look, with the eye of imagination, at the walls of Weston Parsonage. The original essay was quite wrong in suggesting that the walls were not papered, merely on the strength of one very late passage (1800) about whitewash. On 5 June 1783

the Parson wrote: "Bespoke...some Paper to paper one of my Garretts". Almost exactly two years later, on 30 June 1785: "Nancy and self very busy most of the morning and Evening in papering the Attic Chamber over my Bedchamber". We are not entitled to assume that Woodforde used wallpaper only on the attics and whitewashed the more important rooms downstairs; but if this were so, it may have been that the paper was put on as a sort of primitive insulation or "lagging", rather than for any aesthetic pleasure it might give to those who looked at it. For surely, in spite of everything that was done to improve their amenities, these garrets must have been quite appallingly draughty and cold. It has been suggested that the Parsonage was timber-framed, and if so, most of the rooms would have been "studded", and there would have been nowhere to place the wallpaper. This was perhaps just as well, in view of the incessantly smoking chimneys.

* * *

In a conducted tour of even the most palatial of stately homes, there always arrives that deflated moment when the last state-room has been shown and described, and the hoi polloi, shaking their ears a little dazedly, prepare to clump out to the waiting motor-coach. Invariably they pass a staircase with a cord stretched across it, a set of rooms marked "Private". We in our imaginary tour are more privileged, and no part of the house shall remain unvisited. And we have not yet seen what really must be the most important room of all, the reason why we have come here in the first place. We have not seen Parson Woodforde's bedroom. So let us repair that omission forthwith. It must have been, when human eyes looked on it, a very pleasant room. The main article of furniture was a four-poster bed with "moreen" hangings. Moreen was "a stout woollen or woollen and cotton material either plain or watered, used for curtains, etc."—(O.E.D.).

The bed was equipped with a "mattrass", a "Goose feather bed", a bolster and two pillows, and a cotton counterpane. There was a "scotch carpet round the bed"—the Parson must really have been fond of that particular weave—and a "Mahogany dressing chest with drawers". The "Mahogany wardrobe, fine wood, 7ft. 1 inch high, 5ft. wide", brought the unusually high price for a single article of £13 at the sale. And, perhaps most interestingly of all, there stood the "Mahogany writing desk neatly fitted up" at which, it is tempting to speculate, he posted up his diary every night before going to bed. On the other hand, for all the advantages of privacy and freedom from prying eyes that he would have had up in his bedroom, it surely would have been something of a Spartan task to write there in the winter, for he was a man who, while he always felt the cold intensely, did not approve of having his bedroom warmed by a fire, except in the case of severe illness. And he had the "bureau and bookcase" downstairs in the study, which would surely have been far more handy for storing that amazing collection of little books and booklets, 73 of them by the end of the century. The desk in the bedroom may have been a lap or table desk, perhaps brought into the bedroom only after he was confined to bed.

One might say the same of the "Sofa and cushions, in a mahogany frame", also in the bedroom in 1803. Woodforde had bought it in 1788, paying five guineas for it from an upholsterer, Mr. North: "Nancy was highly pleased with the new Sofa—It is covered with crimson Check and Mohogany feet". —Diary, 12 January 1788. This was, we remember, the colour-scheme of the bed-hangings in the attic spare room, and if Nancy liked the colour so much it was perhaps she who ordered the same for the fitting-up of the "Cabin".

It may appear strange that the one concession to real ease that can be proved to have been anywhere in the Parsonage, the one piece of furniture upon which it

would have been possible to recline, to loll, to wallow, should have been up in a bedroom. But wherever it might have been in earlier times, we can account for its later presence in the Parson's room. On that sofa Briton must have slept, at the onset of his master's last illness.

At the sale Dr. Thorne, who may have had his eye on it while attending his patient, bought the sofa. It cost him exactly the price that Woodforde had paid for it, fifteen years earlier.

WESTON PARSONAGE RECONSTRUCTION

These do not pretend to be architectural plans nor are they to any specific scale. The original house probably comprised eight rooms and attics, covered at the rear by a "catslide" from roof ridge to ground floor. The rear roof must have been tiled later but in removing the thatch the Back Kitchen wall would be weakened. The roof must have retained its thatch at the front and over the ridge, thus giving the view seen on return from Somerset in 1795—a typical Norfolk dwelling house.

The Garrets may have had only a flimsy partition, hence Woodforde's reluctance to have guests there—and Bill's easy access to Sukey when the Pounsetts were using his "Yellow Chamber". Charles Roope and Nunn Davie were unwillingly allowed to sleep there in 1785 although the maid had a bad headache so was presumably in bed next door. Wallpaper was bought in 1783 but was not put up until June 1785 when Woodforde and Nancy "did it themselves". By then the "Cabin" had come into being.

The fireplaces may have been on the back walls of the Study and Parlour, joining the bedroom flues to meet in the "Tun" at the ridge. If the hearths projected greatly this would have made the chimneys smoke, but would also provide recesses for bookshelves or the "Beaufitt Doors". The Kitchen would have its own flue, and there would be another for the Brewing copper. A single storey extension would contain Back Kitchen, Brewhouse, and possibly Dairy.

The landing would have a central dormer window and the garrets and back bedrooms dormers or small windows. Study and Parlour may have had pairs of windows with Pier Glasses and tables between them.

CHURCH IS SAVED BY FIRE CALL

Prompt action by a churchman prevented Diss Church from becoming an inferno on Christmas Day.

Fire broke out in a roof beam of St. Mary's Church exactly two weeks after the Bishop of Lynn, the Rt. Rev. Aubrey Aitken, delivered a sermon there beginning dramatically: "Fire in the Church".

But it was nipped in the bud when sacristan Mr. Neville Edwards discovered the smoke passing from inside the chancel roof and called the fire service.

The rector of Diss, the Rev. Jimmy James, said: "Two weeks ago exactly the Bishop of Lynn was here for confirmation, and he began his sermon somewhat dramatically by saying: 'Fire in the church!' Well, now he's a prophet, because we had a fire in the church".

The fire did not interfere with any Christmas Day services.

Two fire appliances from Diss, with Station Officer Arthur Tillett in charge, tackled the fire with a hose reel and by cutting away at the roof beam where the fire was.

"It will cost nothing. There is nothing really to be put right," said Mr. James, who was "absolutely flabbergasted" at the speed the fire crew came to the scene.

"Had it not been for the action of Mr. Edwards, we really would have had a calamity on our hands."

Mr. Edwards did not wish to enlarge on what happened, but Mr. James said: "He came in at about 4 p.m. to lock up the church and saw that there was a very small fire.

"He did the most sensible thing possible, and dialled 999. The fire chief told me that if it had been an hour later the whole roof would have been ablaze."

—*Eastern Daily Press*, Norwich, 27/12/1983
By kind permission of the Editor.

LITERARY WALKS IN NORWICH

Roger Simpson, a language tutor at the Centre for Overseas Students' programmes in the University of East Anglia, has compiled an unusual guide to Norwich.

His book contains four walks around the central area of the city and one excursion to the outskirts. There are anecdotes and quotations spanning the literary life of the city, from Mother Julian (b. 1342) meditating in an anchoress' cell to Arnold Wesker working in the Bell Hotel kitchens and recently published books by Malcolm Bradbury and Angus Wilson.

Parson Woodforde is mentioned on the occasion of his visit to St. Andrew's Hall in 1788 when he heard Madam Mara sing, and again on the following evening at St. Peter Mancroft Church where he heard the same singer in *Judas Maccabeus.*

The guide also includes a reference to the then recently published selections (in 1787) from the Paston Letters by Sir John Fenn. Roger Simpson, however, writes that Woodforde read aloud from these selections to his "saucy" niece Nancy. As readers of the diary will know, the adjective "saucy" is used in places in the diary, but not on that particular occasion (14 March 1787), and it conjures up quite a wrong impression of that entry.

A further quotation, from the entry dated 1 June 1785, is made, describing Woodforde's visit to Quantrell's Gardens, to see Mr. Decker's balloon.

Roger Simpson's accounts of Norwich in times past help the reader to place some of the sights (and sites!) now disappeared; but not all have gone, and many can still be visited.

Martin Creasey provides sketches throughout the book, including one of Parson Woodforde.

This slim volume of 93 pp. costs £2.95 and is printed by W. N. Hutchins & Sons, Norwich.

A LETTER FROM Mr. DU QUESNE, 1786

East Tuddenham
26 May 1786—

Sir

I have examined my Memorandum Books & find the 2 last notices in it of my being at Wymondham to be set down only as follows

1773 Octr. 19.—Wyndham Generals; & 4. April 1778—Generals at Wyndham.

I cannot find any other memorandum of my being at Wymondham since the year 1772 but these 2 notices:- I may have been there since that year & believe I have been oftner [sic] since, either at the Generals there, or through the Town in my way to London, but I cannot recollect or specify the times, nor do I find any other mention of Wyndham, or persons of it in my Book since 1773. Sometimes I used to call upon Dr. Day, both at the Generals, or going through the Town to London, Norwich or elsewhere, and never observed the least Diminution of his understanding & Faculties at any of these times; nor, when I saw him but for a few minutes of my last visit to him in a Chair in his Chamber, did he appear otherwise to me than only in a feeble & declining State of Body, but I was neither struck with, or noticed, or observed a loss or failure of understanding or reason in him, which when I came home, I could have mentioned to my Housekeeper who knew him well by his being often with me, had I discovered & remarked it; I do not remember or recollect when it was that I called upon him last, which was but for a few minutes by way of Call & How dy'e, as I was in, or passing through the Town— This is all the Information which I

can give you concerning my Visits to Dr. Day, & my knowledge of his mental State, which I cannot say ever struck or was noticed by me, to be in a deranged, or imperfect one—

I am

sir

yr. Obedt. humb. Servant
T. R. Du Quesne

The recipient of the letter quoted in full here was Peter Stoughton, an attorney of Wymondham, father of Woodforde's friend Mr. Stoughton, rector of Sparham and Foxley. The letter itself must have been delivered by hand, as so frequently happened at the time, as there is no sign of a post-mark on the outside.

Bartholomew Day, or Dey, son of a Norwich weaver, was born there but went to school at Wymondham. He was admitted as a Pensioner at Caius, Cambridge, on 20/4/1720. Matric., and took the degree of M.B. (not M.D., although he seems to have been generally known by the title of "Doctor"), 1725. Fellow of his college, 1730-79. Practised medicine at Wymondham from 1728; d. 1780. —*Venn: Al. Cantab*. Part 1, Vol. 2, 22.

The obvious assumption here is that Dr. Day had left a Will which someone had challenged, on the grounds that the testator was not of sound mind when he made it. The time-lag here should not surprise anyone who knows the period. In Woodforde's own family, his great-uncle Robert, the Treasurer of Wells Cathedral, died in 1762. Eleven years later the family was still disputing the terms of his Will.

(I am obliged to Mrs. Phyllis Stanley for a photocopy of the above letter, and permission to print it in the Journal.—Ed.)

PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

COMMITTEE 1983/84

G. H. Bunting ..... Chairman

S. O. Quin ..... Vice-Chairman

R. L. Winstanley ..... Editor

Mrs. P. Stanley ..... Secretary

Dr. N. Custance

Miss B. S. Custance

Mrs. S. Knight, M.B.E.

Mrs. M. Matthews

Mrs. P. Quin

O. H. Woodforde, C.B.E.