PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

Quarterly Journal

MAJOR HAMBLETON THOMAS CUSTANCE
in the uniform of the Norfolk Militia

By courtesy of the Norfolk Club, Norwich. Photograph by Gerry Yardy, Norwich

VOL. XXIX NO. 1 SPRING 1996

An Eighteenth Century Advertisement

THOMAS MILLER IN BUNGAY has laid in for the spring Trade an entire fresh stock ... Beavers, Beaverers' Cloth and Felt Hats, Caps, Gold, Silver and Tinsel Lace, Bands, Buttons and Loops: all sorts of Hose, Silk and Worsted Pieces for Waistcoats and Breeches: Gloves and Mittens: Square and oval Pier and Looking Glasses: Mahogany and jappan'd Tea Trays and Waiters, Cases of Silver and Ivory Table and Dessert Knives, forks and Spoons. Tea Chests and tea Caddies, Tea-urns, Coffee-pots, Candlesticks, Wax Candle Jacks, Snuffers and Snuff-trays, Bottle Stands, Ink Chests, Bread and Sugar Baskets, Cream Pails, Mustard Mugs and Salts: Tankards, half-pint Mugs and Goblets: buttery and ironmongery: Wilton, Kidderminster and Scotch carpets: Quilts, Coverlets and Blankets: about 500 pieces of Flock, Mock Flock, Chintz and Stucco Papers for Rooms in new patterns: Books and Stationery.

Finest Hyson, Bloom, Singloe, Souchong and Congo Teas: best Turkey Coffee: Sir Hans Singloe's and fine plain Chocolate and Cocoa.

Finest cogniac Brandy, genuine Jamaica Rum and true Holland Geneva etc.

– E. A. Goodwyn: *Elegance & Poverty – Bungay in the 18th Century* (Morrow & Co., Bungay 1989)

Issued to Members of the Parson Woodforde Society

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

The news that I am very happy to announce concerns the new edition of the volume that used to be called *Ansford Diary I*. I have said it so many times already that I am scarcely to be tolerated if I repeat it; but this is a totally new book, double the size of its predecessor, with revised and in many cases completely re-written notes. Those members who ordered and paid for their copies in advance of publication will already have received them. To them I should like to take the opportunity of apologising, on behalf of the Parson Woodforde Society, for the long wait that has been imposed upon them.

It occurs to me that some confusion may have been experienced by members over the numeration and titling of our diary sequence. The first two volumes were rightly called *Ansford Diary I* and *Ansford Diary II*, because, we being faced with an immense mass of diary material, although a good part of the years 1759-65 were spent by the diarist at Oxford, the University entries were already in print and it was felt that the priority must go to material which was nowhere to be read except in Woodforde's manuscript. The Oxford entries having been restored in the new edition, this no longer applies, so we have re-named the series to carry the general running title of *The Diary of James Woodforde,* this being Vol. I. Its successor, the old *Ansford Diary II*, will upon its appearance be Vol. II of the new sequence.

However, after producing the first two volumes, because of the interest in the Society shown by East Anglian members, and because Woodforde continued to be associated in the mind of the general public largely with Norfolk, we decided to go forward, jumping over several years, to cover the period 1776-81, Woodforde's first six years in Norfolk. The three volumes of this part of the diary were numbered Vols. I, II and III of the new series. We then went back and published *Ansford III*, *IV* and *V*, running from 1786 to 1773, following these with the *Oxford and Somerset* volume, containing the years 1774 and 1775, and thus providing a bridge between the two portions of the diary.

In a future republication of any of these volumes, we shall abandon this rather awkward arrangement, and their titles will be in chronological order, in sequence from 1759 to 1781, under the title of *The Diary of James Woodforde*.

The reader will have noticed that this issue of the Journal is an

extended one, the extra pages made necessary by the length of two of the articles. Angus Fraser needs no introduction to our members. The superbly high quality of both research and writing speaks for itself. Ken Baddley is a new contributor to the Journal, but his work is marked by accuracy and professional finish that is to be rated very highly indeed. When Robin Gibson wrote his fine article on Justice Creed for the last Journal, he purposely left out more than a bare mention of the great quarrel over the singing gallery, which set all Castle Cary by the ears. The piece now introduced to our readers allows us a much more complete picture of this contention than has formerly been available. It is to me personally a profound irony that much of the essay is based on documents in the Somerset Record Office at Taunton that I was solemnly assured did not exist! We are all grateful to Ken Baddley for having found and made such very good use of them.

R. L. WINSTANLEY

Editor

I wish to offer my most profound apologies to one of our members who with great kindness sent me a photograph of Ringland Church for the Journal. This, together with its covering letter, was lost before I had an opportunity to take a note of the sender's address. Repeated searches have totally failed to discover their whereabouts, and I can only express a lasting regret for what has happened. – Ed.

VICE-CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Our chairman's business affairs having whisked him off to the land of "the rebel Americans", these notes come to you not from the foot of the comforting North Downs but from a still decidedly wintry Peak District. Looking out onto snow-covered hills, I am prompted to ask what was the highest point on which our Parson ever stood? (Suggestions on a post-card, please ...).

That is one question which, I suspect, Roy Winstanley's newly-published biography of Woodforde will not seek to answer, but by the time members read this enlarged edition of the Journal many will have read Mr Winstanley's book and will have a more informed and comprehensive view of James Woodforde, his life and times, than we have ever enjoyed before. I certainly look forward to the arrival of my copy with eager anticipation.

1996 has already been an auspicious year in the history of our Society. The publication in February of Volume I of the Society's new edition of the diary brings together for the first time in print all the entries for the years 1759-62. It is a handsomely produced volume, indexed and with updated notes by Roy Winstanley. A recent review by Roy Foster of *The Synge Letters* (written by Bishop Edward Synge to his daughter Alicia between 1746-1752, ed. Marie-Louise Legg) conferred upon them the very highest praise: "... the voice that comes through is not muffled by scholarly apparatus; it is as personal as Woodforde or Kilvert, and this book is as important as theirs". Certainly, it is only necessary to read a few pages of *The Diary of James Woodforde – New Edition: Volume I* to be reminded of how important an insight into eighteenth century life Woodforde provides. Any remaining copies will be on sale at the Norwich Frolic in May, another occasion to which, thanks to the unstinting hard work of Phyllis Stanley, we can look forward with relish.

The young Woodforde did not like to be reminded of his bills, as he was on 31 October 1761:

> Had 2 p^{r}. of Shoes heelpieced and fore=
> =pieced for which I owe Clements –
> I shall pay Clements very soon &
> dismiss him for his bringing on
> my Bill, without my sending for it ...

Fortunately, members of the Parson Woodforde Society are far more understanding and, should they not have paid their subscription (£10), will be happy to be reminded that it should be sent directly to our Treasurer, Dr David Case, whose address may now be found on the back inside cover of the Journal.

MARTIN BRAYNE
Vice-Chairman

"LORD ORFORD'S DROLL-DRESSED MILITIA MEN"

In July 1759 the newly formed Norfolk Regiment of Militia, the first to be chosen for duty outside its own county, was in transit through London on the way to Portsmouth. At its head was George Walpole (1730-91), 3rd earl of Orford, lord lieutenant of Norfolk, and a grandson of Robert Walpole, the former prime minister. The Norfolk militiamen created a stir in the capital. When they were reviewed by George II outside Kensington Palace, the king frequently called out: "They are brave fellows". The man he had reluctantly appointed Secretary of State, William Pitt – Pitt the Elder – wrote to his wife: "Nothing could make a better appearance than the two Norfolk battalions. Lord Orford, with the port of Mars himself, and really the genteelest figure under arms I ever saw, was the theme of every tongue." Orford's uncle, Horace Walpole of Strawberry Hill, did not much care for his eccentric and extravagant nephew. But even he told George Montagu:

> My Lord Orford, their colonel, I hear, looked gloriously martial and genteel, and I believe it; his person and air have a noble wildness in them; the regimentals, too, are very becoming, scarlet faced with black, buff waistcoats and gold buttons. How knights of shires, who have never shot anything but woodcocks, like this warfare, I don't know; but the towns through which they pass adore them; everywhere they are treated and regaled.

That was the glamorous side of the regiment's call-out. There was nothing glamorous about the fate awaiting them at Hilsea Barracks in Portsmouth. Low lying and surrounded by salt springs, the barracks were insalubrious in the extreme. Casualties mounted as men from isolated Norfolk villages fell prey to smallpox, "the flux" (dysentery) and "putrid fever" (typhus), to the point where the regiment had to be marched away again as being no longer fit for duty in Portsmouth.

These Norfolk battalions, and others similarly on the move, represented the new turn given to home defence in the early years of the Seven Years' War, as Britain, ill-armed and ill-organized, faced a long struggle of endurance with France. The military needed a boost to counter the threat looming on the Continent, but augmenting the regular army, or importing foreign mercenaries, would have been highly expensive and, in the case of mercenaries, distasteful to national pride, as the government had already discovered in hastily bringing over Hanoverian and Hessian

soldiers to protect the country. The alternative was to give a large body of men some military training and keep them in civil employment until the moment of danger. Parliament was persuaded to pass an Act (30 Geo. II, c.25) ordering militia regiments to be re-established in the counties of England and Wales. (It was not yet considered safe to arm the Scots and Irish on similar lines.) The nearest thing to compulsory service in the ranks that could be attained politically was the introduction of conscription by ballot among men between the ages of 18 and 50, together with the allocation of quotas to each county. Anyone chosen in the ballot might, however, provide a substitute or pay a fine of £10, although the latter option simply deferred liability for three years. It was soon also enacted that a parish might offer volunteers in place of conscripts. Officers were to be appointed by the counties' lord lieutenants. The control and administration of the force were assigned to a defined class of county gentlemen by establishing a scale of property qualifications, both for the deputy lieutenants who organized recruitment and for the commissioned ranks who commanded the enrolled men. But the money for pay, clothing and arms was to be voted by Parliament and found out of general taxation. These features made the new militia very different – constitutionally, politically and administratively – from the old militias of Tudor, Stuart and Cromwellian times.

It was a Norfolk man, the Hon. George Townshend of Raynham (1724-1807), who steered this 1757 Act through Parliament; and the large number of volunteers in Norfolk ensured that less than half its quota of 960 had to be recruited by the ballot. The county was among the first to respond to the call, by raising the 1st (Western) Battalion and 2nd (Eastern) Battalion of the Norfolk Regiment of Militia. The dividing line between "regiments" and "battalions" varied from time to time, and the designations were sometimes applied loosely. The distinction depended basically on the number and strength of companies in the formation, which in turn determined the permissible number of field officers (colonel, lieutenant colonel and major): only a regiment might have all three. Eventually both Norfolk battalions became regiments in their own right. Townshend's kinsman and neighbour, the 3rd earl of Orford, held the chief command of the Norfolk militia *ex officio*, as lord lieutenant, up to his death. Townshend himself was appointed colonel of the Western battalion; in the Eastern, his fellow Member of Parliament for Norfolk, Sir Armine Wodehouse of Kimberley

(c.1714-77), was lieutenant colonel, with John Hobart of Blickling, 2nd earl of Buckinghamshire (1723-93), in the top rank. A colonel's appointment tended to be in large measure honorific, though influential and affording opportunities for patronage. Often, in practice, the continuous command functions were exercised by the next officer in line. The entire Norfolk regiment was embodied for active service in 1759-62 and again, once France struck an alliance with the rebelling American colonies, in 1778-83. On the former occasion Townshend's cousin and second-in-command, William Windham of Felbrigg(1717-61), quickly had to take charge of the Western battalion when Townshend left to join Wolfe's expedition against Quebec, where he assumed the direction of the British forces on the heights of Abraham at Wolfe's death in the moment of victory.

The second mobilization took place in April 1778, two years after Parson Woodforde settled in Weston. A lord lieutenant, as well as having the overall militia command in his county, could also be colonel of one of its militia units, and since 1774 Lord Orford had held that rank for the Western battalion. At the time of this new embodiment, the man whom Horace Walpole described as "an amazing compost of sense, insensibility, and frenzy" had supposedly just recovered from one of the bouts of insanity that plagued his later life, but I suspect he was still surfing on the crest of a manic high. To the consternation of the king and the Norfolk gentlemen in London, he insisted on sending both battalions to Norwich, whereas, so Horace Walpole wrote to Lord Hertford on 5 April, "his Majesty wishes to have that disposition altered, the greatest inconveniencies being apprehended; and that both battalions should be quartered, as they used to be, at Yarmouth and Dereham". Orford favoured scorched earth defence tactics, and issued orders that the suburbs of Norwich were to be burned down if the French landed anywhere on the coast. He was equally firm over the quality of recruits to the county militia, reporting to the Secretary at War on 28 April that since his arrival he had "Dismiss^{d}. near twenty, misshapen, under Limbed, distemper'd, men" from the Western battalion, and had told the deputy lieutenants to send "none but sizeable, able bodied" ones. When Lieutenant General Pierson reviewed the battalion on Mousehold Heath on 12 May, he found them "a pretty good body of men, but not tall"; their arms and accoutrements were deemed to be "very bad". Although he accepted that "the men seem to have a desire to do well", there was obviously much ground to be made up.

Shortly afterwards the West Norfolks made their decidedly inauspicious debut in Parson Woodforde's *Diary*. The entry for 9 June, when Woodforde spent the night at the King's Head in Norwich, described "a great Riot upon the Castle-Hill between the Officers of the western Battalion of the Norfolk Militia, and the common Soldiers & Mob owing to the Officers refusing to pay their men a Guinea apiece as they go to Morrow towards the Place of their encampment". So alarming was the conflict, with stone-throwing by the mob and use of bayonets by some soldiers, that when the Parson went to bed after midnight he took off only his coat, waistcoat and shoes, in case of further trouble. A note in the Society's edition of the *Diary* suggests that he had probably got hold of a garbled and exaggerated story, since no corroboration could be found in the two local newspapers. But, in an age when rioting was a common means of popular protest, violence was always a possibility to be reckoned with at times of mobilization of the militia. There were riots in Sussex in the same year of 1778, and in Merionethshire in 1779. Clashes over the "marching guinea" were endemic until it was abolished in 1812. In an article on Bill Woodforde in Journal XXVI, 4, I quoted (p. 31) an ugly dispute that occurred at Bath in 1810 when the West Mendip Local Militia refused to obey orders for reasons very similar to those said to have sparked off the rumpus on Castle Hill in 1778. Although Lord Orford, not usually an assiduous correspondent, liked to send the Secretary at War long letters, in his own hand, about how well his battalions were doing, I could discover nothing from him at the right time to shed light on the Norwich incident. All I would suggest is that the account in the *Diary* reads like an eye-witness report and has the ring of truth. Woodforde himself went on to say: "I was at the Place for some Time till near 11. o'clock".

What did emerge clearly was that the Western militiamen were about to find that soldiering with Orford was anything but dull and left little room for the nursing of grievances. Their colonel's behaviour was sometimes bizarre, as when he insisted on presenting his militia with bushel upon bushel of onions, but he was an enterprising commander, passionately absorbed in the occupation of the moment. Once the Western battalion got to "the Place of their encampment" – Aldeburgh – in June 1778, they did not lack for variety. Orford was keen on marksmanship and they expended thousands of rounds on target practice. After several days of exercising them on land, he staged what he called a "Noumachia",

a mock battle at sea, in which four boats filled with soldiers had to row out to a ship, fire two volleys and then board with fixed bayonets. A prize of half a crown went to the first boat to board. Less make-believe were Orford's battles against smugglers: in his view all the clergy, lawyers and doctors of the area were involved in this traffic, while in Aldeburgh everyone was, except for the parson. The "Noumachia" may have been useful preparation for one of the encounters, when a detachment of his men clashed with a gang of smugglers who were attempting a landing at Southwold under cover of a bombardment by a twelve-gun cutter. Lord Hertford informed Horace Walpole: "He has taken the prize for which they contended, but with the loss of 6 or 7 militiamen, which they wish to conceal". Orford's next enthusiastic venture was to raise, clothe and equip an additional company of volunteers at his own expense. By the time Major General Warde inspected the battalion on 16 October, it had been welded into an effective fighting force, though less concerned with putting on a show for parade-ground spectators. Warde observed that "they must have been a great deal Manoeuvred & likely to be ready & attentive to Orders in the noise & confusion of Service; but are not a *very* highly finished parade Reg^{t}.". The downside to Orford's engaging dottiness and his willingness to spend liberally on current preoccupations was his sometimes devastating irresponsibility; and it was also in 1778 that he set about selling off to Catherine the Great the supreme memorial of the Walpole grandeur, the collection of pictures at Houghton Hall assembled by his grandfather. Most of them remain in the Hermitage in St Petersburg to this day.

The following year, through the vagaries of the ballot, Parson Woodforde was at risk of much inconvenience within his own establishment. On 17 February 1779 he lent his servant Will Coleman a guinea "to subscribe towards raising a Man for the Militia if he should be drawn, as there are many more that have done the same at 10^{s}/6^{d} each". This is a reference to the "clubs" that grew up as a crude form of insurance against being picked out in the ballot. Insuring against that was lawful if the subscriptions were confined to a single parish, a restriction that would later lapse. Such schemes indemnified those who were unlucky in the ballot by providing money for the hire of substitutes to take over the three-year commitment (five years, from 1786), an option that was widely used. Prices for substitutes fluctuated, and rose when there

was an increase in militia quotas and hence in demand. The going rate had been six guineas after balloting was first enforced, but by 1798 it was almost three times as high. Ben Leggett, the Parson's farming man, had not been so provident as Will Coleman, and when his name came up in September 1779 it cost him nine guineas (something like £650 in present-day terms) to persuade a substitute in Norwich to take his place. The Parson gave him one guinea towards this expense. Unless Ben also secured some assistance from the parish, the net outlay of eight guineas must have been a very considerable blow to his finances, given that his basic wage was £10 a year, even if much of that was probably disposable income.

Once the hostilities with the Americans were over, and the less distant menace from their Continental allies had therefore evaporated, the home forces were drastically reduced. Save for annual trainings and parades – as on 4 June 1790, the king's birthday, when Parson Woodforde had sight of "Lord Orfords droll-dressed Militia Men at Norwich, red Cloth Slops and long white Trowsers" – mobilization of the militia did not start again until late in 1792, two months before the declaration of war by revolutionary France; and then it would be almost ten years before it was stood down. With the death of the 3rd earl of Orford, Norwich's suburbs were less at risk than they had been during the previous conflict. A kindly obituary was entered into the *Diary* on 6 December 1791: "a Man universally respected and will be universally lamented as he was one of the Most Charitable, humane Men, as has been known many a Day".

The new threat was internal as much as external, for the spirit of insurrection had spread across the Channel to Britain, and not least to Norfolk. Nancy Woodforde noted in her diary on 17 November: Great talk of Revolusion Clubs all over the Kingdom". Her last entry for the year made it clear that she had no truck with such radical impulses, as she recorded that Mr Foster of Lenwade Bridge was "very much against the Revolusion People which I think every honest Man aught to be"; while Fanny Burney, staying at Aylsham in 1792, was "truely amazed to find this country filled with little revolution societies". On 8 December the newspapers "brought by Bidewells People" prompted matching reflections in two different Weston diaries. Nancy: "Great talk of Mobs all over the Kingdom – I see by the Papers that his Majesty has ordered and directed the Lord Lieutenants of several Counties to embody the Militia ...".

Her uncle: "Riots daily expected in many parts of the Kingdom, London &c. &c .... Militia ordered to be embodied the ensueing Week. ... Norfolk Militia to meet on Monday next, One Division at Yarmouth, the other at Lynn." The two battalions had now acquired the status of regiments. The colonelcy of the West Norfolks, whose headquarters were initially in King's Lynn and later in East Dereham, had passed from Orford to his cousin, the Hon. Horatio Walpole (1752-1822), a grandson of Prime Minister Walpole's brother and himself subsequently earl of Orford. The command of the East Norfolks, with headquarters in Yarmouth, remained the preserve of the Wodehouse family: from 1774 their colonel was Sir John Wodehouse (1741-1834), created Baron Wodehouse in 1797 and shortly afterwards succeeded in the colonelcy by his son, the Hon. John Wodehouse (1771-1846).

It is this period of the French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars that first prompted the present article, and in particular the activities of the West Norfolk Militia, the regiment which provides the link between some of the people who drop in at Weston Parsonage and the figure who aroused my interest in things East Anglian and, indeed, occasioned what was only my second foray into England, in the interval between school and university. (The first had, appropriately enough, stopped short at Hadrian's Wall.) In August 1945, between the explosion of Fat Man and the Japanese surrender, I laboriously made my way from central Scotland to a somewhat battered Norwich to visit places associated with George Borrow. It was a well-timed move for a seventeen-year-old, for a few years later the city corporation closed down Borrow House Museum and dispersed its contents. Borrow's father was adjutant of the West Norfolk Militia, and the rhythms of George's early life and of the more mature years of certain inhabitants of Weston Longville were determined by the regiment's movements up and down the country.

Thomas Borrow (1758-1824) joined the West Norfolk Militia at Lynn at the same time as Horatio Walpole became its colonel, in March 1792. A Cornishman, he had served for several years in the Royal Cornwall Regiment of Militia while apprenticed to a maltster in Liskeard, but after a fracas which left his master felled to the ground, he found it expedient to enlist in the Coldstream Guards in 1784, and transferred from there to the West Norfolk staff in his existing rank of sergeant. Each militia unit required a nucleus of professional soldiers, who received pay and did duty even when the

militia was not embodied for service or training. One sergeant from the regulars was appointed for every 20 men. Thomas Borrow rose to sergeant-major not long after his marriage in 1793 to Ann Parfrement, daughter of a farmer at Dumpling Green, Dereham, and in 1795 attained commissioned rank as quartermaster and ensign. His final promotion, in February 1798, was to adjutant, with the rank of lieutenant and later the brevet rank of captain (i.e. he did not get captain's pay). The normal property qualification for militia officers was waived for professionals, so he did not need to own land worth £50 a year to be a lieutenant. But for him, junior commissioned rank was the climax, not the start, of his military career – a fact which his son commented on rather sourly in *Lavengro*: "With far inferior qualifications many a man has become a field-marshal or general; ... but the race is not always for the swift, nor the battle for the strong, indeed I ought to say very seldom; certain it is, that my father, with all his high military qualifications, never became emperor, field-marshal, or even general." Young men with more favoured backgrounds – and often, perhaps, less merit – certainly overtook Captain Borrow in the race; but there is nothing in Borrow's portrayal of his father, as a man of unyielding orthodoxy, suspicious of any challenge to established authority, and incapable of comprehending his wayward younger son, to suggest that it was only the system that held him back from great things. His fists may have done battle in Hyde Park with Ben Brain, a future champion of England, but they were scarcely Gray's "hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd".

An Act of 11 November 1796 (37 Geo. III, c. 3) created the supplementary militia and required the counties to raise an extra levy of 63,878 men to augment the home defences and free regular forces for offensive action. Of these, Norfolk was expected to find almost 2,000. The Act was the government's response to what Parson Woodforde, on 10 September, had termed the "Serious apprehensions ... entertained by many in high rank of the French invading England some time this Autumn". On 7 November he sent Ben Leggett and Briton Scurll to Reepham to attend a justices' meeting for organizing measures against riots. Back they came with black staves and black leather guards for their hands while wielding them. On the staves was painted in white "E.H.L.A." (Eynsford Hundred Loyal Association). Such precautions were far from idle, even if Ben and Briton did not themselves have to break any heads – which was just as well, since there is no indication of any training.

Past experience showed that many would forcibly resist the execution of a law imposing military service. And indeed, the new Act provoked rioting on a nation-wide scale, largely because of misunderstanding and a failure to realize that real conscription was not being introduced forthwith. Originally, the supplementary militia was intended for no more than occasional service. To save money, the new soldiers were to live at home and be assembled for a 20-day period of training within their own counties, during which time they would get a shilling a day and support for their families. The government was strongly pledged not to call them out unless invasion was immediately in prospect.

The *Diary* is disappointingly thin on what happened next in Norfolk. From 19 November it contains several general references to widespread disquiet: "No good News upon the Papers but rather the contrary on Account of the late Act for augmenting the Militia – Riots talked of very much about it – Rebellion said to be in Ireland, & the French at the bottom of it." But for more specific details of local reactions, we need to turn to letters sent to the Duke of Portland, the Home Secretary, by Lord Townshend, formerly commandant of the West Norfolks and since 1792 Norfolk's new lord lieutenant. Within the counties, the lieutenancy played a role in military matters equivalent to that of quarter sessions in civil and legal administration, and answered to the Home Office. Nationally, the disposition of the forces on the ground, when embodied for service, was a matter for the Secretary at War, and they then came under the command of the generals in charge of military districts. On 15 November 1796 the lord lieutenant, deputy lieutenants and justices of the peace of Norfolk were due to meet in the Shire House in Norwich Castle to consider the implementation of the new measures. Townshend recorded how a "very numerous, and outrageous Mob" clustered round their carriages, "using the most violent expressions and menaces – As the minds of these people had been poison'd by seditious hand bills, They called out to know what was the purport of the Acts of Parliament." His attempts to reassure them inside the Shire House failed to quell the unrest, and the lieutenancy business had to be adjourned to the Angel Inn in the Market Place. The civic authorities were better prepared for a second meeting scheduled for 24 November. More constables were sworn in and an imposing body of troops was drawn up before the Castle. All we learn from Woodforde's entry for 24 November is: "Another Meeting to Day at Norwich respecting the late Militia

Augmentation Act, of the Lord Lieutenant &c. for the County of Norfolk". Writing to the Home Secretary, Townshend was able to report this time that the meeting got through its business without interruption. The worst that happened was that "a great number of ill disposed people came in from the Wymondham side of the County and paraded in a distant part of the City and sufficiently expressed their intentions by burning Mr Pitt, Mr Windham and the Bishop of Rochester in Effigy". The outspoken opposition of Dr Horsley, Bishop of Rochester, to the Revolution had apparently elevated him in the eyes of the mob to the same hateful plane as the Prime Minister and the Secretary at War, son of the former commandant of the West Norfolks and himself once a major in his father's old battalion.

The popular fears proved unfounded, at least in the balloting district that included Weston. On 16 February 1797 the Parson was told "that Matters concerning the supplementary Militia were settled Yesterday at Reepham by the Justices ... More Volunteers offered than wanted". The first militiaman to appear at the Parsonage, however, had joined the regular, not the supplementary, militia. This was Billy Gunton, the brother of Sally Gunton whose life is featured on another page of the present issue. He is listed as a private in the West Norfolk Militia muster roll for the latter half of 1797. At one time he had been living fast and loose. In February of that year, his sister and Ben Leggett had to dash off to Norwich to restrain him: "He is spending his Money and Time there in a very idle manner – has been to London &c." But he adapted well to the new discipline, soon gaining promotion, and it is as "a Grenadier and Corporal in the Norfolk Militia" that we hear of him in the entry for 15 January 1798, when he calls at the Parsonage to take leave of Sally before rejoining his regiment at Colchester after a few weeks furlough. In mid-1798 he rose to sergeant. The illness reported in the *Diary* on 21 August caused unnecessary panic, for he was soon restored to health and there is no further evidence of sickness during the rest of his service with the West Norfolks. In October 1799 he transferred to the 56th Regiment of Foot. Providing recruits for the army from the militia was a perennial concern, since the latter's system of substitution meant that both militia and army were fishing in much the same pool: men attracted by a lump sum payment could serve less riskily at home with the militia. By now, the government's need for militiamen had receded and thousands of them were induced to enlist in the army for a bounty of £10.

Not so very long before, however, priorities had been different. Invasion scares were rife in the early part of 1798, as the *Diary* testifies. Local Volunteer forces grew again, while the government mobilized the supplementary militia from February onwards, destroying its advantage of cheapness. It was from that time that the *Diary* began to record visitors to the Parsonage wearing regimentals. On 27 February: "Young Bacon came in his military uniform being in the Norfolk Militia and a Lieutenant in Lord Woodhouse's Div.". This was Edmund Bacon jun. (1779-1864), a nephew by marriage of Squire Custance, and quite a frequent visitor to Weston. He was also related to Lord Wodehouse. Mrs L. H. M. Hill's *The Custances and their Family Circle*, reissued as Supplement No. 8 to the Journal in 1989, provides an extensive account of the family history of the Custances and their near relatives, and refers to militia connections on pp. 39, 40, 43, 45, 46, 48, 58 and 60. Understandably, there was some ambiguity about which units were involved. Edmund Bacon was commissioned into the *East* Norfolk Militia as a lieutenant in December 1797, and for the first few months was shown in the pay lists as "attending Supplementary Militia" – in what capacity is not clear, although it seems likely to have been connected with training, which was so far as possible to be carried out by officers and NCOs of the regular militia. Under the statute, supplementary militiamen might be incorporated into existing units or be formed into new corps. Norfolk's quota of 1,992 meant that there were many more than could be fitted within the original framework, and a 3rd Regiment of Norfolk Militia was called out for service when the county's militia was embodied in April 1798. Among the captains of the new formation was William Durrant (1779-1846), another nephew of Squire Custance. Edmund Bacon, however, stayed with the East Norfolks. He was promoted to captain in June 1798 and took over the regiment's grenadier company. (From 1786 each militia regiment had to have a company of light infantry and one of grenadiers. Such "flank companies" were supposed to be the cream of the unit and skilled in skirmishing.) A month later Captain John Wodehouse, at the age of 27, shot up to colonel of the East Norfolks on the resignation of his father. Perhaps he was militarily the best equipped for the command; perhaps there were no rivals for a rank demanding possession of land worth £1,000 a year or being heir to land worth £2,000 a year.

Edmund was soon joined in the East Norfolks by his cousin Hambleton Thomas Custance, although Edmund's company was

at Colchester, while the bulk of the regiment was at Ipswich: flank companies had by now been ordered to be detached and grouped together under regular officers. Hambleton, Squire Custance's eldest son (1779-1845), started his militia career in the rank of captain. His commission dated from August 1798, when he was 19 years old. On 2 September the *Diary* noted: "Hambleton Custance has got a Captains Commission in the Norfolk Militia, given to him by Lord Wodehouse very lately and he sets off to join the Regiment at Ipswich on Tuesday next". His commitments appear to have left him with a fair amount of leisure. He had a long spell of leave in January-March 1799, and called in at the Parsonage several times. On 4 September he "came walking, dressed in a neat plain way as a private Gentleman – nothing at all Militaire". In November, the regiment conveniently moved from Ipswich to Bungay, within closer range of Weston. More conveniently still, Hambleton's company was detached from the main body. On 12 November he was out shooting at Weston and borrowed the Parson's little cart "to go to Hingham Ball. His Militia Men are there". On 18 November: "Nancy & her Brother after breakfast took a walk to Church-Street to see Capt^{n}. Custance's Company of Norfolk Militia march through Weston in their way to Aylesham from Higgham but they were disappointed as they marched another way, thro' Norwich &c." The life was evidently losing its appeal for Hambleton: a week later, when he was at the Parsonage in uniform, he was reported as saying that he had "declined continuing any longer in the Supplementary Militia". He was not actually serving with the unit formed entirely from the supplementary militia (the 3rd Regiment). That was stood down in December 1799; William Durrant had resigned from it six months before. But the regular militia also lost men, and Hambleton left the East Norfolks for good in the same month. It was a time of exodus. Edmund Bacon hung on for another six months, and then he resigned too, just before the regiment was due to move north to Yorkshire.

Within a year, however, Hambleton had a change of heart. The Parson was able to record on 29 November 1800 that he was "going into the Norfolk Militia again". It is now that the Custance link with Captain Borrow's regiment begins, for this time Hambleton was bound for more intrusive soldiering in the West Norfolks. In December he joined them in Portsea Barracks, Portsmouth. At first he occupied the post of "captain-lieutenant", in charge of the regimental commander's company, but it was not long before he acquired a company of his own. Up to the Peace of Amiens in 1802,

when the militia was disembodied, the West Norfolks' marching orders took them from Portsea in mid-1801 to a succession of duties in Porchester Barracks (just outside Portsmouth), Winchester Barracks and Ipswich. The spring and summer of 1801 were yet another period when the country was in a ferment over rumours of intended invasion. On 6 August Parson Woodforde was greatly upset to receive a bundle of papers under cover of a letter from the bishop, giving instructions on what was to be done if the French did land, and turned helplessly to Squire Custance for advice. A week later the squire's son managed to get back to Weston for the first time that year. On 16 August, the *Diary* tells us, "Mr. Hambleton Custance was in full Regimentals. He is but very lately arrived home from Portsmouth where he hath been on duty for the last 9. Months. He is to return back again in about a fortnight. He looked very hearty & well indeed." The fever subsided once the preliminaries for a peace were signed in October, and when Hambleton reappeared at the Parsonage on 26 November he had every expectation of being at home for some time. So it turned out. He was mostly on leave up to the regiment's disembodiment at East Dereham in April, and the declining Parson's references to Hambleton's calls became more frequent, until the *Diary* petered out two and a half months before his death.

Thanks to the interruption of the conflict, Thomas and Ann Borrow were able, for over a year, to live quietly in the town where they had first met. They now had a two-year old son, John Thomas, and their only other child, George Henry, was conceived and born in Dereham. The uneasy peace was, however, manifestly a temporary affair. A new Militia Act was passed in 1802 (42 Geo. III, c. 90), and the militia was re-embodied in March 1803, even before war was abruptly resumed. Norfolk's quota was set at 1,209. The threat of invasion receded somewhat after Trafalgar but in the early years was alarmingly real. Napoleon created a new Army of England in May 1803 and, when he went to Boulogne in 1804 to inspect the French preparations, he told Admiral Tréville: "Let us be masters of the Channel for six hours, and we are masters of the world". A military build-up started again in Britain. During the first seven months of 1803, Captain Borrow carried out recruiting duties in the western part of the county and his name began to feature prominently as attesting officer in the regimental enrolment book. His function with the West Norfolks is commonly described in entries on George Borrow in works of reference (e.g. the *DNB*) as

"recruiting officer". In fact, that was an incidental and intermittent feature of his job as adjutant. Like other officers, he played a part in enrolling new recruits, but the furnishing of those recruits was the responsibility of the community: the county lieutenancy allotted parishes their quotas, supervised the balloting, and then gave notice to the militia adjutants of the days appointed for enrolling the men on whom the lot had fallen, or their substitutes. Even the finding of volunteers was laid on the parishes, empowered to levy a rate on the inhabitants to finance bounties of up to £6, and it was unlawful for anyone to order militia personnel "to beat up in any city, town, or place, for volunteers to serve in the militia". This restriction can be attributed to the government's desire to conserve potential supplies of manpower for the army. Images of Captain Borrow which place him in charge of some brutal press-gang owe more to imagination than to veracity. However inequitable the system of ballot may have seemed to reluctant militiamen who were caught by it and so poor and unfortunate that they could neither provide a substitute nor pay a fine, it was under the control of local authority and a long way removed from the press-gangs of the navy, instruments of central government, often obstructed by local officials. (The naval Impress Service itself could not afford to be undiscriminating in looking for seaworthy manpower, and tended to raid incoming merchantmen and taverns where seafarers were gathered.)

When the West Norfolks were re-embodied in March 1803, Hambleton Custance was appointed major, at the age of 24. The legal qualification for that militia rank was possession of land worth £400 a year or being heir to land worth £800 a year. At the same time Edmund Bacon, after nearly three years out of uniform (he had married his cousin Mary Anne Bacon in August 1801), rejoined the East Norfolks, though only for a year. The Nicholas Bacon who entered the same regiment as a captain in June 1803 and served until 1807 may have been his brother (1786-1863). William Durrant also took up a captain's vacancy in the East Norfolks. A few years later he successfully invoked the property qualification in his own favour when his colonel was backing the senior captain for promotion to major.

From mid-1803 to late 1805 the West and East Norfolks would be brigaded together and follow the same rotation. When the Western regiment marched off to Colchester Barracks in June 1803, it left its adjutant on detached duty at Dereham until after George

Borrow's birth on 5 July. But soon the small family was on the move. As Borrow wrote in the second chapter of *Lavengro*: "from my infancy I was accustomed to travelling and wandering, and looked upon a monthly change of scene and residence as a matter of course. Sometimes we lived in barracks, sometimes in lodgings, but generally in the former, always eschewing the latter from motives of economy, save when the barracks were inconvenient and uncomfortable." During his first nine years, the West Norfolks were posted around East Anglia and the south-eastern counties. These were potential invasion areas; but another reason for keeping militia units away from their own counties was a fear that, if they were nearer home, they might take the wrong side in civil disturbances. The constant change no doubt held attractions for a young boy, and Borrow certainly cherished roseate memories of that period.

> Pleasant were those days of my early boyhood; and a melancholy pleasure steals over me as I recall them. Those were stirring times of which I am speaking, and there was much passing around me calculated to captivate the imagination. The dreadful struggle which so long convulsed Europe, and in which England bore so prominent a part, was then at its hottest; we were at war, and determination and enthusiasm shone in every face; ... Oh, those were days of power, gallant days, bustling days, worth the bravest days of chivalry, at least; tall battalions of native warriors were marching through the land; there was the glitter of the bayonet and the gleam of the sabre; the shrill squeak of the fife and loud rattling of the drum were heard in the streets of country towns, and the loyal shouts of the inhabitants greeted the soldiery on their arrival, or cheered them at their departure. ... Stirring times were those, which I love to recall, for they were days of gallantry and enthusiasm, and were moreover the days of my boyhood.

Perhaps, however, there were also special tensions in growing up in a family that was isolated from the general community and seldom had time to put down roots.

The Custances' involvement with the militia spread into the administrative sphere once Squire Custance became one of the county's deputy lieutenants in July 1803. On the military side, his son Hambleton was now at the centre of things in the West Norfolks. As the sole major, he was in effect second-in-command to Lieut. Col. George Nelthorpe. Above Nelthorpe was, of course,

the colonel, Horatio Walpole, but his presence was sporadic, and he was often absent on Parliamentary duties. There were eight companies of about 75 men, each a captain's command, but the complement would soon rise to ten companies of around 90, to accommodate a new intake under a provision of the 1802 Act allowing the king to increase the militia by up to 50 per cent in the event of imminent danger of invasion. From now on, Hambleton's leave was more sparse and generally came in one long spell of eight or nine weeks in winter, when there was seldom much likelihood of invasion and officers and men could readily be spared. The regiment left Colchester in July 1804 and spent most of the remainder of that year at Cox Heath, a vast tented camp near Maidstone. In November 1804–June 1805 they were at Silver Hill Barracks, near Hastings. From July to October 1805 Cliff End Camp was their station, four miles eastwards along the coast from Hastings, by the village of Pett; and that was the scene of the first episode that Borrow claimed to relate from memory in *Lavengro*.

A word of warning is needed, however, about using *Lavengro* as biographical evidence. Borrow began to write this book at the age of 39. During the first few years of composition, he referred to it as his "Life". But as he went on he discovered that he needed to transform reality into his own apprehension of the truth. In his previous works he had dropped hints of further adventures that he was ill-placed to substantiate and had set himself a standard of unusual incident that was difficult to sustain. He ran into immense difficulty over the later stages of the book, and it was not published until 1851. Even then, he had to break off in the middle of the narrative, and in the preface he now described *Lavengro* as "a dream, partly of study and partly of adventure". The second and third volumes of this three-decker contain characters and episodes that are owed to Borrow's creative imagination. The first volume, on the other hand, appears in the main to correspond more closely with events he recollected from childhood and adolescence, reviewed from the brooding perspective of decades later. In the early chapters, Borrow selects moments of revelation and concentrates on episodes that were important to his development, often charging them with almost transcendental significance. In the jargon of modern literary criticism, these might be termed "epiphanies" – not because of any connection with the three Magi, but because of the original Greek meaning of "manifestation". James Joyce, who gave the word its literary connotation, is full of

epiphanies in *Dubliners*, *Portrait*, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. But a more apposite term here, with no spiritual overtones, might be the one that De Quincey coined in his *Suspiria de Profundis* for "compound experiences incapable of being disentangled" – experiences that sink into the mind and are orchestrated with the later life. De Quincey's word was "involutes"; but it never caught on.

Borrow's account of Cliff End starts: "We once lived within the canvas walls of a camp, at a place called Pett, in Sussex". The two-year-old child, while playing, caught hold of a golden viper, or adder, to the consternation and terror of his mother and brother. It lay docilely in his grasp, but when the others approached it hissed, with "eyes like hot coals", and then made off. Thus does Borrow begin to mark himself out as someone set apart. From there the regiment moved to barracks at Battle, Blatchington (near Newhaven) and, for some 18 months, Canterbury. On 7 August 1806 they were inspected at Canterbury by the commander-in-chief of the army, none other than George III's second son, the Grand Old Duke of York, who seemed highly pleased with them. Borrow says nothing of the inspection, but it was in that summer that he placed another "involute", the sight of a huge "Daneman's skull" during a visit to the ossuary at St Leonard's church in Hythe. Memories in childhood tend to be more photographic than in later years, but the apparent accuracy of Borrow's visual recall as he recreated these childhood scenes could be remarkable, particularly if, in this instance, one accepts his assurance that he was not yet four years old. His description of the interior (if not the structure) of the ossuary tallies with its condition before the skulls and other bones were put into more orderly stacks in the 1840s. To that skull he traced his later interest in all things Danish and a passion for translating old songs of Scandinavia. Then the regiment turned once more in the direction of East Anglia, to Faversham, Chelmsford, Woodbridge and Colchester, with never more than a few months in any one barracks or camp. While they were at Woodbridge, the protracted and difficult negotiations over the marriage settlements for Hambleton Custance and Mary Bower were going on (Supplement 8, pp. 45-6). Hambleton was on leave for large stretches of 1808. At last, in February 1809, the wedding took place in Bath and Hambleton returned to the regiment in March. By then his 27-year-old brother William (1781-1862) had also joined, commissioned as a captain.

One of the inspection reports on the West Norfolks dates from 12 May 1809. Six weeks before, the colonel had inherited the title of earl of Orford. The inspecting officer was Major General Kerr, whose concluding remarks were: "This is an excellent Regiment, and fit for any service, the Men are well taken care of, & receive every thing that is due in pay & cloathing – No one kept upon the Strength who is not properly cloathed & doing the Duty of a Soldier – No Band." Among the supporting data is a table of the numbers of men at each height – a standard feature of such reports – and one can readily calculate the average height of the 593 NCOs and privates who were with the regiment at Woodbridge at that time. It was 5ft 6½ inches, two inches shorter than the average height of male adults in England and Wales now – 174.4 cm. (I record this current information, derived from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, because it had seemed to me, in examining the enrolment book, that many of the recruits were "vertically challenged" and that Borrow's reference to "tall battalions of native warriors" owed something to his having observed them from the vantage point of a young boy.)

No doubt it was domestically a great convenience to the recently married Hambleton that Norwich was the regiment's next duty station, from August 1809 to March 1810, just as it must have suited Captain Borrow to be able to spend those months on recruiting duties around Dereham. This is the second period when his name occurs frequently as attesting officer in the enrolment book. The militia had sent thousands of men to the line regiments in 1807-9 (115 went from the West Norfolks) and needed to be replenished. An Act of 1809 (49 Geo. III, c. 53) provided for filling the gaps, with enrolment "by beat of drum" for a bounty of up to 12 guineas. The ballot was held in reserve to make good any deficiencies after a year or so of voluntary recruitment. It did have to be resorted to in the end, with the usual troubles.

When the regiment left Norwich again, it was under orders to perform guard duties at the prison camp at Norman Cross, near Stilton in Huntingdonshire. The camp was constructed in 1797. That was the year in which Parson Woodforde had a couple of unwelcome letters (one asking for money, the other described as "very impudent") from his cousin Robert Woodforde, who was acting as an assistant surgeon there (*Diary* 2.7.1797 and 12.10.1797). The first prisoners had arrived on 7 April, so Robert Woodforde must have been in post right from the start, or very

shortly afterwards, working alongside other British surgeons and the qualified French prisoners who helped them. One of the earliest batches of captives excited considerable curiosity among the citizens of Norwich when they were lodged in the Castle for two nights, after being landed at Yarmouth, and then marched out of the city singing the *Marseillaise*.

Norman Cross and Dartmoor were the first purpose-built POW depots in England. Unlike the granite prison at Dartmoor, begun in 1805, Norman Cross survived only until 1816, when it was razed to the ground. To its wooden compounds, controlled by a central block-house mounted with small cannon, came thousands of prisoners of war – soldiers and sailors of French, Dutch and other nationalities. The guards were usually from militia regiments, regularly changed so as to preserve an arm's length relationship. The West Norfolks would spend six months there (23 March–11 October 1810). The East Norfolks had done a stint the year before. On 10 April 1810 there were 44,583 prisoners of war in England, and 6272 of them were held at Norman Cross. They were brought through the Fenlands under strong escort, often transported on board the lighters (barges) that sailed the Fenland waterways, including the now-vanished lake of Whittlesey Mere. The Squire family, to which midshipman Bill Woodforde's captain belonged (cf. 'Nephew Bill: sailor and soldier', Journal XXVI, 4, 1993), made large profits from ferrying prisoners, and Thomas Squire, a Peterborough merchant and banker, became the agent who looked after the officers and civilians on parole in Peterborough and its neighbourhood. The prisoners confined at Norman Cross were not employed on works outside the walls, and many whiled away the time in handicrafts. Among their favourite products were models fashioned from bones from the cookhouse, and straw hats and articles of straw marquetry. One of the bequests to Squire Custance's widow in his Will was "a watch case given to me by my son William Custance and made by the French Prisoners at Norman Cross" (Supplement 8, p. 48). A collection of these wares can be seen in Peterborough museum, including a two-foot-high bone model of a guillotine.

The camp made a deep impression on the developing sensibilities of the seven-year-old Borrow, and in Chapter 4 of *Lavengro* he left the only literary account of it that is of any consequence. Once again, his visual memory was vivid: "What a strange appearance had those mighty casernes, with their blank blind walls, without

windows or grating, and their slanting roofs, out of which, through orifices where the tiles had been removed, would be protruded dozens of grim heads, feasting their prison-sick eyes on the wide expanse of country unfolded from that airy height." Whether he was correct in his round condemnation of the quality of the prisoners' rations has been disputed, on the basis of the specifications in the victualling contract (as if it were unthinkable that corruption might sometimes have led to a shortfall between the contract and the quantities and qualities that actually reached the prisoners). Also disputed have been the "straw-plait hunts" that Borrow described, but there is no real room for doubt about these. The prisoners often sold their artefacts to people outside, to such an extent that local traders complained of unfair competition. A vicar who visited the depot in 1807 recorded that some of the prisoners could accumulate £200 or £300 by such means – and also wrote feelingly of the discomfort of the wooden barracks outside the boundary walls, where the soldiers lived. The making of straw hats was forbidden from the start, and manufacture of straw plait nine years later, because of the undermining of wartime import duties; but a good deal of smuggling in and out of the prison went on (including obscene pictures and carvings), abetted by some of the soldiers. There were local residents who made large sums of money by hawking the straw plait around the district or sending it to wholesalers in London. Indeed, the prisoners transformed English straw plait technology by inventing a device for cutting straw into strips, which produced much finer plait. Borrow described the periodic searches: "red-coated battalions were marched into the prisons, who, with the bayonet's point, carried havoc and ruin into every poor convenience which ingenious wretchedness had been endeavouring to raise around it".

It was also in one of his rambles at Norman Cross that Borrow placed his original meeting with Jasper Petulengro – the Jasper of the "wind on the heath" dialogue on Mousehold Heath a decade later, probably the best known passage in any of his works. Here, however, we are faced with the first of the series of time-shifts that displaced Borrow's Gypsies, and in particular Jasper's prototype, Ambrose Smith. In *Lavengro*, Jasper is said to be "a lad of some twelve or thirteen years" at Norman Cross, whereas in 1810 Ambrose Smith was more like five years old. By the time he *had* become a lad of twelve or thirteen – around 1817 – a much older Jasper Petulengro re-emerges in the parallel but interlocked

universe of *Lavengro* to confront the narrator on Castle Hill in Norwich. His parents, he says, have been transported for counterfeiting, and he is now the head of his clan. Back in the real world, several more years would pass before Ambrose Smith's father met a similar fate: at Bury St Edmunds in 1822, he was condemned to be hanged for a burglary involving bales of cloth and quantities of made-up fabrics. The sentence was commuted to transportation for life, but he died in 1826 on a prison hulk off Portsmouth. Ambrose himself stood trial with his father, but was acquitted. His age was recorded as sixteen. If Ambrose Smith did meet Borrow in a lane at Norman Cross as a child, he was scarcely likely to have played the part attributed to Jasper. True or not, however, it is artistically a powerful scene, as the soldier's boy stumbles on counterfeit coiners and creates a sensation with the tame viper hidden inside his shirt.

The 16 months following the guard duties were divided among barracks at Yarmouth, Woodbridge and Harwich. It may have been at Yarmouth that George embarked on the study of Lily's Latin grammar, which three years later he could recite from end to end, parrot-fashion, "till you were glad to beg me to leave off ... Sometimes, however, to convince you how well I merited these encomiums, I would follow you to the bottom of the stair, and even into the street, repeating in a kind of sing-song measure the sonorous lines of the golden schoolmaster." During the Woodbridge period (August–November 1811) the Borrows were able to be back at Dereham, where Captain Borrow resumed recruiting and where, if it was not at Yarmouth, George started his grappling with "the golden schoolmaster". Captain Borrow appears never to have called at Weston on his recruiting rounds: the places of attestation were larger centres of population. The only man recorded in the enrolment book during 1787-1813 as being a native of Weston (places of residence were not noted) was one Richard Arms, a labourer aged 21 who was attested at Swaffham on 13 February 1812 – not by Captain Borrow. Possibly he was a son of Mr Ames, the cooper who features in the *Diary* around his presumed time of birth. He subsequently transferred to the Coldstream Guards.

Then came a decisive change in the terrain allotted to the regiment. From March 1812 they made their way in a generally northerly direction, with short stays in Melton Mowbray, Leicester, Tamworth, Macclesfield, Stockport, Huddersfield and Sheffield.

Hambleton Custance was no longer with them, for he resigned on 14 April 1812. Perhaps, knowing what was coming, he had decided that his duty did not extend to such far-flung places, particularly as he had two small children to think of, Hambleton Francis, born in 1809, and William Neville, born in 1811. For his brother William and the other members of the regiment, even the longest period at rest now lasted for less than four months. When they stopped long enough, George was sent to a local school to snatch an education, while his brother John appears to have been left in Norwich for less broken instruction at the grammar school. In March 1813 the West Norfolks' route became more single-minded, as they began the 250-mile march to Edinburgh Castle, accomplished in 18 days. Captain Borrow was on horseback. Mrs Borrow and George followed in a post-chaise. Some of the officers avoided the Edinburgh duty altogether, while William Custance had several spells of leave (one lasting five months, on "private affairs"). For the Borrows, there could be no such option and Edinburgh Castle was to be the family home from April 1813 to July 1814. Despite Captain Borrow's hankering for a statute that would "force these Scotch to speak English", he sent both the boys to the High School. But "the Scotch are certainly a most pugnacious people", observed George, and before long he was being drawn into the "bickers" between the Old Town and New Town gangs. Living in the Castle, George owed his allegiance to the Old Town. He describes how, on one occasion, as he lay at the mercy of a baker's boy, the leader of the New Town gang, he was saved from the *coup de grâce* by one of the West Norfolks' drummers, Davy Haggart. Haggart had enlisted at Leith Races (intoxicated, and just 12 years old, if one goes by the *Life* he wrote while under sentence of death). The enrolment book described him as 13 years and 197 days old, 4ft 9in tall, and pale complexioned, with grey eyes, light hair and an oval face. His militia interlude lasted less than a year (7 August 1813 to 6 July 1814), and one month of that was spent in prison for assault. Seven years after his discharge, he was hanged in Edinburgh for murder, at the age of 20, following a career of crime in Scotland, England and Ireland which bore little resemblance to the screenplay for John Huston's film *Sinful Davey* (1968), a ramshackle imitation of the box-office success, *Tom Jones*. Well might Borrow elegize, "Peace to thee, poor David", as he contemplated the drummer's fate with the indulgent sympathy for misfits and outcasts that characterizes much of his work.

In April 1814 Napoleon's abdication brought the prospect of lasting peace. In July the West Norfolks were mustered out in Norwich, only to be re-embodied the following May after Napoleon fled from Elba. George Borrow's brother John now joined the regiment as an ensign, while his father, for the last time, travelled around Norfolk enrolling a sizeable intake of recruits. Waterloo settled the war for good before the West Norfolks had time to reassemble, but a force of regulars and militia was thought to be needed for troubled Ireland, and they were one of the chosen regiments. They embarked from Harwich in August and made their way to Clonmel, where George attended the Free School in Mary Street for a few months. ("Free" was a misnomer: the tuition fee was four guineas a year.) "My education", declared Borrow in Chapter 10 of *Lavengro*, "would not be what it is – perfect, had I never had the honour of being *alumnus* in an Irish seminary". Seated among the twenty or so other boys, predominantly Protestant, in a long, gloomy hall with dilapidated walls, he now studied Greek as well as Latin. It was, however, not the school curriculum that led to the perceived perfection of Borrow's education. To the horror of his father, he also made a point of picking up Irish from one of the Catholic boys in exchange for a pack of cards, and it was Irish that "became the stepping-stone to other languages. ... It was not a school language, to acquire which was considered an imperative duty; ... but a speech spoken in out-of-the-way desolate places, and in cut-throat kens, where thirty ruffians, at the sight of the king's minions, would spring up with brandished sticks." In the course of the next 40 years Borrow managed to acquire varying degrees of familiarity with something like 50 languages, and when he was 31 brought out a volume of verse translations from 30 languages and dialects (*Targum*, St Petersburg, 1835).

Ensign John Borrow, assigned to William Custance's company, was promoted to lieutenant from 23 December. At the end of the year the regiment marched north to Templemore, to the barracks used nowadays by the Garda Siochana as a training centre. For two months John Borrow enjoyed a detached command of one sergeant and 20 privates at the nearby village of Templetouhy, where much of his work consisted in going out at dead of night in search of illicit poteen stills, although his sergeant did come to violent grips with Jerry Grant, a robber and outlaw whom George also encountered, complete with "fairy dog", in a boggy stretch to the west of the village, still unreclaimed today. At Templemore George appears to

have been left pretty much to his own devices. He roamed the countryside, visiting the ruined castle at Loughmoe and his brother at Templetouhy, and learning how to ride. All this is related in some of *Lavengro*'s most atmospheric chapters, and again, to judge by his accounts of Loughmoe and the Clonmel school, the boy had a sharp eye for detail. The school building is no longer there, and for corroboration of its physical layout and condition one has to turn to contemporary printed sources; but the imposing ruins of Loughmoe Castle still stand, and the hall with the great fireplace is unmistakably the spot where Borrow sets his encounter with "an old woman, at least eighty, ... seated on a stone, cowering over a few sticks burning on what had once been a right noble and cheerful hearth", and who, when the intruder asks in Irish whether this is her house, replies: "My own house, the beggar's house – the accursed house of Cromwell!"

In April 1816, having served for seven and a half months in Ireland, the regiment started on its return journey and was mustered out at Norwich on 17 June. John Borrow went back to his art lessons under John Crome, and George to Norwich Grammar School. William Custance had already resigned in February after a protracted spell of sickness. William Durrant's connection with the *East* Norfolk Militia, on the other hand, lasted long beyond the end of the Napoleonic wars. Following two years as a major, he was promoted to lieutenant colonel in 1808 and stayed until 1824, and then became a great comfort to his long-suffering mother (cf. Supplement 8, p. 35).

A final association between George Borrow and the Custances arose from his quest for subscriptions to one of the mature fruits from his sight of the "Daneman's skull" at Hythe – *Romantic Ballads, Translated from the Danish, and Miscellaneous Pieces*. The list of 146 subscribers at the end of this volume, published in 1826, included "H. Custance, Esq., Weston Longueville" and "Rev. M^{r}. Custance". The former must have been Major Hambleton Thomas Custance, who could hardly have failed to see something of Borrow during the first nine wandering years of his life. The Rev. Mr Custance was presumably Hambleton's brother John (1787-1868), characterized by the Parson at fourteen as "a nice steady young Man & fond of Books", and who went on to become rector of Blickling and Erpingham. If Borrow tried to extract half a guinea from brother William as well, on the strength of the militia bond, he evidently failed. Whether the "Mr. W. Bacon" who *did* subscribe

was related to the Bacons known to Parson Woodforde, I cannot say. *Romantic Ballads* was not, of course, the book which established Borrow's enduring literary status. That was to depend on the handful of original works he produced years later, episodic narratives capturing the imagination with strange characters and racy picaresque sketches and the crotchety but compelling personality of their narrator.

The Custance connection with the West Norfolk Militia still had a long way to run. Major Hambleton Custance's first son, Hambleton Francis (1809-92), joined the regiment as a captain in May 1829, the year in which the militia ballot was suspended, and from 1854 served as its lieutenant colonel and also, from 1870, as honorary colonel. He resigned in 1881, at the time when the West Norfolks became the 3rd Battalion of the Norfolk Regiment (lately the 9th Regiment of Foot), in the reorganization which gave purely territorial designations to the army's infantry regiments in place of the old numbers and attached the volunteer militia to these county or city regiments as their third and sometimes fourth battalions. Hambleton's second son, William Neville Custance (1811-86), entered the West Norfolks as a lieutenant in 1828, but moved on to the regular army in 1831, reaching major general in 1868 and general in 1880.

I take William Neville to be the father of the first two Custances of the succeeding generation to continue the family affiliation with the West Norfolks. Hugh Lionel Custance joined as a sub-lieutenant (= second lieutenant) in December 1875 and was promoted to lieutenant in June 1877; in 1879 he transferred to the 90th Foot. And Sydney Custance was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the West Norfolks in June 1879, but resigned nine months later without ever having joined. Hugh was born in 1858 in Meerut, and Lieut. Col. W. N. Custance was commanding the Carabineers at the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny at Meerut in 1857. Sydney was born at Fordingbridge in Hampshire in April 1862. At that time Colonel Custance was not on active service, but on half pay.

It was the son of Hambleton Francis, Frederic Hambleton Custance (1844-1925), who created the final link between the West Norfolks and the Custance family of the *Diary*, when he became a major in the Norfolk Regiment's 3rd Battalion in 1881, the year of the redesignation, after serving from 1864 to 1872 in the Grenadiers. He was its lieutenant colonel and then honorary colonel from 1896

to 1904, commanding it in South Africa during the Boer war. Had he been able to stay on for a few more years, he would have seen out the militia altogether, for it was replaced by the Territorial Force in 1907. It may have been his retirement that prompted the painting of the water-colour portraits of himself, his father Hambleton Francis and his grandfather Hambleton Thomas Custance, all in uniform, which hang today in the Norfolk Club in Norwich. They were done in 1905 by the one artist and are mounted side by side within a single frame, capturing a century-long association of three Custance generations with the one regiment. Hambleton Thomas's, not previously published, is shown on the front cover of the present issue of the Journal. I could see little resemblance between the face in this watercolour and the portrait reproduced in Beresford's edition of the *Diary* (Vol. 3, between pp. 362 and 363), and wondered whether the artist lacked any likeness from the life as a guide in delineating Hambleton so long after his death.

Anyone who has persevered this far may feel that the article has been over-indulgent to Borrow's side of the story. But if Major Hambleton Custance and Captain William Custance had similarly memorable experiences of life with the West Norfolk Militia at the time of Borrow's childhood, they failed to record them for posterity. Lapsing now into outright commercialism, I conclude by mentioning that, if any member of the Parson Woodforde Society is a closet Borrovian and would like to come out, the George Borrow Society, founded in 1991, welcomes new members and publishes a *George Borrow Bulletin* twice a year. The Hon. Secretary is Dr James Reading, 112 Irchester Road, Rushden, Northants NN10 9XQ, and the annual subscription is £8.

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SALLY GUNTON

If we look at the characters in the diary, by no means limiting our survey for the purposes of comparison to female servants, we do not, I think, find a more attractive personality than Sally Gunton. Woodforde had his occasional troubles with maidservants, we all know that, but Sally was a treasure rather than a domestic problem. She did her work well, to the evident satisfaction of the master, she did not fall out with any of her fellow servants, she was healthy and energetic. I have the distinct impression that she was a big, robust girl, well able to carry out the normal domestic duties of an eighteenth century household, which even for women demanded physical strength. I think she had the equable temperament that went with very good health. Our last sight of her, fittingly, is at her wedding, just as in some "happily ever after" romantic story.

She was the last to be taken on of the female servants at the Parsonage, and her term of employment there spans the last eight years of Woodforde's life. Her immediate predecessor was Mary or "Molly" Woods, who strenuously denied her pregnancy until it

had become obvious to everyone. Then she was sent away in disgrace (or, as the Parson wrote, testily, "in her Situation, it is necessary for me to part with her as soon as possible") and went off, carrying her possessions in a bundle, to walk to another parish, Woodforde not feeling inclined to order out his "little old Cart" for her to be driven to her destination. Molly, however, was far better off than many, perhaps most girls who found themselves in her predicament. Her lover, Sam Cudble or Cutbill of Colton, a carpenter, announced that they would be married; indeed, that he "made not the least objection to marrying her". This makes us wonder why, if she was really sure of this, she delayed so long before revealing her condition. However, it ended well for her. She left the Parsonage for the last time on 3 November 1794, stayed at the home of Cudble's father until she was married, and her daughter was safely born in wedlock on Christmas Eve, something which must have made a great deal of difference to the prospects of that particular child.

A fortnight then went by before the vacancy in the kitchen was filled. Molly Woods had been the cook. The holder of this post had originally been the senior maid and paid slightly better than her colleague. Woodforde, however, had some considerable time before this regularized the situation by paying them five guineas a year each. We must not assume that until the place was taken he and his niece were deprived of their toothsome and highly nourishing viands or, perish the thought!, were driven to take a turn with the utensils of cookery themselves. They simply hired temporary assistance, in the form of a village girl, Sarah Richmond. It was she who on 3 November provided a really mouth-watering spread: "We had for dinner to-day a boiled Rabbitt, Root of a bullock's tongue boiled also, a Loin of Mutton rosted, and Apple-Dumplins", before she was replaced and "went home to her friends".

Sally Gunton, no doubt a quite different kind of girl from Molly Woods, also had her troubles. Large, important landowners who possessed a London residence as well as a house in the country often chose to spend the winter, London, season in the capital and closed down the country mansion. They maintained only a skeleton staff, most frequently on what were called "board wages", a sum of money which provided a very inadequate substitute for all the perquisites in kind which they enjoyed whenever the family was in residence. The upper servants, and long-service staff, went to town

with their master's family. It is interesting that we see this from the viewpoint of the diary itself, when Briton was allowed to "go and see the Servants of Mr. Townshends at Honingham Hall before they go for London, which will be sometime this Week". The others were just turfed out, at a bad time of year to be out of work. It was precisely at Honingham Hall that Sally Gunton was employed, with time now running out for her. On 8 November Sally called at the Parsonage "to offer her Service in the room of my late Maid".

It may appear to some readers that the eighteenth century mode of dealing with the employment of servants was casual, slipshod and disorganized. In reality, there was a very efficient employers' grapevine, by the use of which they could gain quite an accurate knowledge of a job applicant, before there was any need to commit themselves to a decision. Betty Dade was sent round to talk to the housekeeper at Honingham, and returned with "a satisfactory Account", and as Woodforde had clearly formed a favourable impression of Sally from his personal interview with her, there was no obstacle to her being appointed.

Sally Gunton was not a native of Weston, but still a local girl. Gunton is a Norfolk place-name, and not far away. Her parents were both dead, and she had an only brother. John "Moonshine" Buck, farmer and smuggler, is described as her uncle, and she is described as once having stayed overnight at his home. She had a cousin, Lizzy Bowles, who was married in 1799, Sally being present at the wedding.

Woodforde calls her "a Girl about 20. Years of Age" in 1794. She had probably not been long enough at Honingham to have established herself. On the other hand, she quickly made the grade in the Parson's household By 25 November he was writing: "We like our new Maid, Sally Gunton, as yet very well indeed". He says little about her in the first years of her service, merely noting such details as the payment of her annual wages; but this in itself is a sign that she was continuing to give satisfaction, for Woodforde commonly has most to say about his servants when he was complaining about their behaviour.

A good notion of what might be expected, in the way of additional duties outside their general terms of service, from living-in servants is provided by the Parson's account of his serious illness, which began in May 1797. All the adult servants were called upon to "sit up" with him in his room; Ben and Sally, then Briton and Betty. On 19 May he reports: "Ben & Sally sat up with me to night – Sally a

bad sitter up indeed – very restless to night". The following day he rubbed it in: "N.B. Sally a bad Sitter up at Nights". On 22 May something happened, or he imagined it did, which caused him to become very suspicious – no new thing with him, but we must make allowances for his being ill, confined to bed and with two other people in his room, whom he had suddenly begun to think that he was unable to trust. On one of the loose sheets of paper which he had been using since the onset of his illness, instead of the usual diary volume, he wrote agitatedly: "Memorandum. Ben Leggatt & Sally Gunton sat up with me last night. N.B. I have a particular reason for making this remark which made me uneasy – not to sit up with me on any account. Time will shew the cause of my Uneasiness and Suspicion". All but the first of the lines have been crossed out, but can still be deciphered. There is no further reference to this, whatever it was, but he apparently did not call again upon Ben and Sally. On 26 May he records: "Had no one to sit up with me to Night".

At the beginning of 1798 Sally was given "her Audit Gift of 0: 2: 6", presumably for extra work during the Tithe Frolic in the previous December. Only she and the Yard Boy were similarly rewarded.

It was also in this year that Sally appears in rather a different light. The Parson's dog Rover, "a most sagacious & sensible Dog as I ever had", was found dead near his kennel, supposedly poisoned by some farmer anxious about the fate of his lambs. He notes: "It vexed me much, he being a favourite of my Maid, Sally Gunton, she could not help crying for him – she was very fond of him". We see that Sally had a natural empathy with animals, and this fits in well with the episode in which she hived the bees. They settled "not above five Yards from the Hive and not more than three feet above ground and on a Filbert-Bush". Sally tied "a Piece of thin Gauze... round her Face and was not stung at all in taking them", as Woodforde noted, looking on from what was no doubt a strategically safe distance (*M.S. Diary, 25/6/1802*).

Perhaps Sally may be accused of rocking the boat a little when the servants' wages were paid in January 1801: "They were all contented but Sally Gunton who wanted her Wages raised higher, but I would not comply with her request". She had now been over six years at the Parsonage and probably thought she deserved a rise, but this was a hopeless quest for anyone dealing with a man like Woodforde, who was quite inflexible in these matters. On the other hand the security offered by her job was valuable, as she had

perhaps reflected when seeing Lord Bayning and his eldest son when they paid a social call at the Parsonage; for this recently ennobled peer was the former Mr Townshend who had fired her out of Honingham Hall.

Unlike Betty Dade, who had two suitors but could not make up her mind which to choose, finally marrying a third man, Sally Gunton went through the most straightforward kind of courtship, ending in marriage. We do not know when she became engaged, but Thomas Harrison, son of the local thatcher, is mentioned as her "intended" on 17 October 1800, when they went together to St Faith's Fair. As he had not been with her when Sally went to the races at Lenwade with Ben and Betty in July, the betrothal was perhaps of no very long standing.

The last mention of Sally Gunton in Woodforde's diary is dated 27 August 1801, when she had permission to go "to M^{r}. Salisbury's Harvest Frolic this Evening and to stay out all Night".

In the case of living-in servants, their activities were often conditioned by the affairs of their employers. While Sally Gunton remained single and in the Parson's employ, she could save most of her five guineas a year wages or use it to purchase articles which would later be of use in her married life. To defer marriage so long as possible made sound sense in economic terms. At the same time, the break up of a household often led to the marriage of servants, who preferred it to finding another place in service.

Sally Gunton did just this. Six months after Woodforde died, in June 1803, she married Thomas Harrison.

The marriage highlights another interesting point, that of literacy. I think that those who concern themselves with this topic sometimes go wrong through their too credulous reliance upon parish registers. There is a tendency to contrast those who could write and those who could not, or at least did not, write their names on official documents. But to look at some of the signatures in the registers shows clearly that those who made them must have handled a pen only once or twice in the course of their lives, and are therefore very doubtfully "literate" in any real sense of that term. And what do we say about their opposites, those who were perfectly able to write but who, for one reason or another, chose not to do so?

This leads us straight back to Sally Gunton. In January 1795, when Woodforde paid her 15 shillings for the seven weeks she had at that

time been working in his household, he wrote in her name and she appended a mark. The same happened in a number of succeeding years. But then in 1799 something very interesting happens. She writes a perfectly clear and well formed "Sarah Gunton". Evidently in the interval Betty or Briton, both fully literate persons, had taught her to write. This continued for the next three years, but then we come to the marriage certificate in the parish register, and see that she has gone back to making a mark.

It is inconceivable that, able to write her name in January 1803, she had lost this ability by June. What is the explanation? Was it that, in public and on this great day in her life, she was just too agitated and nervous to write her name? Or is there a more mundane reason? Did Mr Dade, the former curate of Weston Longville, who conducted the wedding ceremony, assuming that she was unable to write, put in her name himself, leaving no space for her to do more than add her mark?

I have elsewhere remarked on a case which concerns one of my own ancestors, who signed the register both times he was married, but when it came to registering the names of his children, simply made a mark. I believe that similar anomalies are by no means uncommon.

TROUBLE IN THE GALLERY

In 1695, the people of the parish of Castle Cary provided themselves, by means of a subscription list, with a new gallery at the west end of their parish church. It was still there for Edward Rack to see ninety years later, just after 1785, when he wrote notes on Castle Cary and other Somerset villages for John Collinson's 1791 *History of the County of Somerset*, the first such history of the county to be published. Rack described Castle Cary church as being a respectable Gothic structure, the interior of which must have been quite a sight to behold, having clusters of pillars painted to resemble Sienna marble, 72 box pews painted in a stone colour[1] and rood screen, communion table, communion rails and the pulpit painted in bright blue. The pulpit had, in addition, a 'large green cushion cloth'. Of the gallery, Rack wrote:

> In the singers' gallery is a small organ. The front of this gallery is handsomely painted and in the middle of it is a painting of David playing on his harp. Over it are old arms, ... and above are two very antique but disgustful figures in carved work ...

I shall omit Rack's detailed description of the armigerous device to which he refers in that passage but suffice it to say that "gold chevrons on a parted blue field with three griffins heads surmounted" can only have added – in terms of eighteenth-century taste – to the appeal of the whole. It is possible, though, that Rack may have been looking only upon a shadow of the former glory of the church, for as he says:

> The marks of Cromwell's fury are very evident in this church. He demolished the old organ, and destroyed many of its ornaments.

It is obvious, then from the fact that Rack saw an organ in what he referred to as the singers' gallery, that the people of Castle Cary had also provided either during the building of the gallery, or at some later time, a new organ to replace the church organ which Cromwell's men had destroyed and though no specific date for the installation of the new organ survives in the churchwarden's accounts, we may safely assume that as the case-work of the organ was partially built into the wooden fabric of the gallery, it was installed in 1695 with the gallery itself.

The organ had of necessity to be replaced. After the dissolution of the monasteries in the mid-sixteenth century, the plainchant of the monks had given way to a new five- and six-part polyphony in cathedral churches and those larger urban parish churches which could afford to ape their style. This music, which used not only organs but also sackbuts, cornetts and other woodwind instruments, survived the troubled years of the Marian Catholic revival and the Elizabeth settlement intact, but was thought profane by Cromwell, who considered only the human voice suitable for the praise of God. Thus, as the new order came about, Cromwell's forces systematically removed from the churches as many of the despised organs as they could find.

Village church meeting reverted to simple congregational psalm-singing, with organ accompaniment creeping back in as the seventeenth century wore on. The words of these metrical psalms[2] were "lined-out" for a largely illiterate congregation by the parish clerk, each syllable being measured against the time it took for a large clock to give one pendular beat,[3] a musical form which

allowed aspirant singers in the congregation to decorate the simple tunes with vocal ornaments and harmonies, a process which, in the opinion of most of the clergy, robbed it of any devotional sense or feeling. It remained thus until the early eighteenth century when, very gradually, a new and popular vernacular form of music (including hymns, though not yet carols, which were entirely secular) began to emerge in rural churches. The parishioners of Castle Cary were, it seems, quite early in erecting their singing gallery in 1695, though as they equipped it with an organ, we may safely assume that they did not quite so quickly jump on to the bandwagon of this new and exciting music,[4] with its Purcellian and Handelian fuguing tunes,[5] little instrumental interludes known as "symphonies" and the novel factor of having to turn in one's box pew to "face the music"; the origin of that particular term.

Groups of musicians playing viols, flutes fiddles, bassoons and serpents and singers (I'll use the term "singers" generically from now on, as most of the clergy did), established themselves in many parishes over a period which, in historical terms, is very short: the first fifty years or so of the eighteenth century. Organic growth would have accounted for the geographical spread; parish would have influenced neighbouring parish, and the emergence of dissenting chapels influenced the dissemination of the music, but there must have been something else which facilitated the establishment of these gallery bands; some condition favourable to their existence, because organic growth alone could not have enabled disparate groups of people from largely unenfranchised levels of society to establish the kind of local power-bases which contemporary records show that they did.

I would suggest that – the popularity of the music apart – some of the answer lay in the state of the established church. This was a time of decay in the English church, a time when it was possible for a clergyman, as Woodforde himself records, to send money instead of attending in person at Archdeacon's visitations; and at which sometimes the Archdeacon was not present. A time when it was common for a clergyman to hold multiple livings and not serve any of them himself; when levels of ecclesiastical duty were so low, as the Vicar of Fordington was to record as late as 1820, that before his arrival in the parish, "no man had ever been known to receive the Holy Communion except the parson, the clerk and the sexton", and a time when the singers could – and did, apparently – step in to fill an effective power-vacuum in village churches.

Contemporary accounts show that some of these bands of singers did indeed see themselves as exercizing considerable power at a parish level, and they seem fairly often to have come into conflict with the local church hierarchy. This cannot have endeared them to the clergy, and the extent to which they had become a thorn in the ecclesiastical flesh may have contributed to their later decline and fall, but the fact remains that the established church of the land was moribund, and – almost as an echo of the Reformation period – birds flew in and out of the windows and dogs ran between the pews.

We are familiar enough with Woodforde's references to the churchyard at Cary being used as a fives-court; indeed, the churchwardens' accounts reveal the number of times that the parish paid to have the area dug over to deter the players, but we can only imagine the discomfiture of the long-suffering vicar of Fordington, who (as Kilvert's diary records) saw the sacrament turned to sacrilege by his poor parishioners, who, unused to receiving the sacramental chalice, wished loudly "Here's the good health of our Lord Jesus Christ", and – to the incumbent himself – "Here's your good health, Sir" before they drank from it.

It is against a background such as this that the band of singers in Cary Church was established. We may assume that they were indeed also a troublesome group, as one of the best recorded accounts of a gallery-band dispute survives in James Woodforde's diary for late 1768 and the early part of 1769.

Roy Winstanley has said[6] that diarists write only about what happens to interest them at the moment of writing. Narratives which are written primarily for others to read are wholly different. Winstanley makes the distinction that the diarist, writing solely for his own enjoyment, feels no need to include what he calls "necessary explanation". The problems in the church gallery therefore only interest Woodforde – and only begin to appear in the diary – when he realises that the dispute involves his friend Justice Creed, seems likely to involve a court case, and, most importantly for the fairly unassertive young curate, when it appears that there is a cloud on the horizon of his own normally tranquil world.

There are, as Winstanley says, disadvantages for us in this kind of diary-keeping, in that events are not necessarily recorded in any logical sequence; that entries may reflect loyalties and emotions rather than facts, and – worst of all – that there may be gaps in the narrative for which there are few other sources of reference.

Having said that, the manuscript version of the diary, combined with evidence from the churchwardens' accounts for the period, does enable us to follow the full sequence of the dispute.

The churchwardens' accounts for 1768 for the parish of Castle Cary show that on 5 November, the bellringers had been paid – as usual – six shillings and eight pence for ringing the bells to commemorate what Woodforde refers to in his entry for that day as :

> the Day on which the Papists had contrived an hellish Plot in the reign of K. James the first, but by the Divine Hand of Providence was fortunately discovered –

Woodforde preached a commemorative service at Castle Cary that day, as he was required to do and, as we know from the rest of that entry, there was a bonfire that evening:

> I dined, supped & spent the Evening at Parsonage – The Effigy of Justice Creed was had through the Streets of C. Cary this Evening upon the Engine, and then had into the Park and burnt in a Bonfire immediately before the Justice's House, for his putting the Church-Wardens of Cary into Wells Court, for not presenting James Clarke for making a Riot in the Gallery at Cary Church some few Sundays back – The whole Parish are against the Justice, and they intend to assist the Church Wardens in carrying on the Cause at Wells – The Justice is now at Lord Pawletts at Hinton –

Let me expand upon that rather difficult entry:

The effigy-burning was in fact in support of the churchwardens, not of the singers. Justice Creed seems to have instituted proceedings in the Consistory court at Wells cathedral,[7] because he felt that the churchwardens had both failed in their duty and affronted him, by not recording and bringing to the attention of the Archdeacon at his visitation the riotous behaviour in the gallery of James Clarke. They had failed, as the term was, to present him. The bonfire was, of course, a routine celebration for that day, so much so that Woodforde might not have recorded it, other than for the scandalous behaviour of the people involved in making an effigy of Justice Creed and burning it in a direct imitation of the fate of Guy Fawkes. We should perhaps digress to recall at this point that we are looking here at events which took place only a handful of years before the anti-Catholic Gordon riots of 1780,[8] when the symbolism of such a burning would not have been lost on anyone who witnessed it. Events such as these can only have been seen as

a dreadful insult to Cary Creed, who was after all a Justice of the Peace.

Poor Woodforde. A legal dispute – if only in an ecclesiastical court – involving both his closest friend, Cary Creed, and his cousin James Clarke (five years younger than the diarist), who was not only one of the Cary singers, but also appeared to have taken the leading role in the dispute.

Some of the issues behind the insult may have been associated with Creed's status within the community; the validity (or otherwise) of that status as perceived by the people of the parish, and the fact that Creed had spent many years out of the parish, and for the following biographical information I am indebted to Robin Gibson, whose recent writings have told us so much about Creed and his friend Mr Hindley.

Creed was the grandson of a previous incumbent of Castle Cary, John Creed, who had been the predecessor of Samuel Woodforde, the diarist's father, as vicar of Castle Cary.

He was the son of Cary Creed senior, whose occupation is unknown, but to whom Gibson refers as a member of the minor gentry, involved probably in trade rather than a landowner. Cary Creed junior was probably well educated, but he did not go to university. He had worked in a government office and at the Court of the King's Bench and his "autocratic and officious" manner had, in Gibson's opinion, been developed there.

He had also become acquainted with a rich and influential family, that of Earl Poulet, whom he served in a part-time capacity, probably as secretary, from the 1730s until the earl's death in 1764, soon after which he retired to Castle Cary to live with his father. He appears to have acquired a modest degree of wealth from his employments and from two bequests, including one from Earl Poulet.

It has recently come to light that Creed became a "squire", when he acquired the manor of Lovington, not far from Castle Cary, (which would have entitled him to be called "Squire" in that parish) soon after which he became a Justice of the Peace, probably with the assistance of Earl Poulet.

The events which – from the diary entries – appear to have precipitated the burning of Creed's effigy seem to have been those surrounding the behaviour of the group of people, including his cousin, to whom Woodforde always referred as "Cary singers", and the efforts of Cary Creed, and at least one other, as this particular

"bandwagon" developed momentum, to impose discipline or control on this unruly group. Here is part of Woodforde's diary entry for 14 August 1768:

> ... There was a kind of Riot this Afternoon in the Gallery at Cary Church, between James Clarke and Hoskins about sitting in the Gallery, but it was just before I came into Church, all quiet afterwards –

and the entry for 4 September, 1768:

> ... Justice Creed & M^{r}. Hindley made a short visit this morning at Parsonage – M^{r}. Creed desires that the Door leading into the Gallery in Cary Church might be taking [sic] down on account of the Singers keeping out his Servant there this morning – Tom Davidge – the Singers have made disturbances before now and likely to make more –

So this was the root of the trouble; one Hoskins had tried to take a seat in the gallery and Creed had specifically sent Tom Davidge to sit there, but for what reason? We might speculate that Davidge may have been sent off to sit – as a mere servant of the Justice – in the gallery rather than in Creed's pew-for-life,[9] as a way of publicly preserving the social differentiation of which Creed was evidently so conscious. It might also have been a case of Creed sending Davidge to sit among the singers in a genuine attempt to suppress the unruly behaviour to which the young curate refers in the diary entry for 4 September. On the other hand, it may have been no more than Davidge being without a place to sit; being sent to sit in the gallery by his master (something which he could hardly refuse to do), and the singers resenting the presence of a "non-singer" in a part of the church which they felt to be their own.

The churchwardens' accounts provide a clue, because there seems indeed to have been some form of territorial dispute involved in the occupation of the gallery. The disbursements recorded on 19 June 1768 are as follows:

Gave the men liquor for moving the organ	0 - 3 - 0
James Clarke, for a lock, nails and the curtain hinges and one long brush	0 - 13 - 5
M^{r}.Hadley for painting the Organ and partition	0 - 15 - 6
Ditto for Gilding	0 - 4 - 6

There is a later reference, too, which, while it is admittedly out of sequence here, does serve to make the point that the organ was not

only moved out of the gallery altogether, as the churchwarden's accounts for 27 July 1809 reveal in the following entry:

> ... It is agreed that the remaining part of the organ be removed from the gallery, by which removal several seats or sittings will be added to the gallery, and do order the churchwardens to get it done as soon as possible ...

An organ installed in a small parish church about or after 1695, as this organ was, would have been a tracker organ, perhaps with a common bass of thirteen notes or so, and with the pipework contained within what would have given the appearance of being a chamber organ. Rack's notes on the church confirm that the organ was indeed a small one, and contained entirely in the singers' gallery.

It does therefore seem that the singers, led by James Clarke, had succeeded in having the organ removed from the gallery, leaving behind that part of the casework which was built in to the gallery, which perhaps provided them with the necessary space for the fiddles, viols, flutes and serpents with which these gallery singers equipped themselves. The money which was paid to Mr Hadley for making "a partition" and for painting and gilding, was, as we know from later entries in the accounts referring to other work in the church in 1809, for work done on the organ after it had been moved down into the body of the church.

Further evidence, if it is required, is the fact that the churchwardens had paid 13/5¾ to James Clarke for a lock, nails and curtain- hinges in order to be able to close off the gallery as and when the singers wished to do so. Later diary entries will show why we can confidently assert that the gallery was not merely partitioned down the middle, but for the moment, please accept my assurance that we know this to have been the case, and those of the diarist, when he records that Creed and Hindley "wished that the door leading into the gallery in Cary church might be taking [sic] down".

It would also have been very odd for the churchwardens to be paying James Clarke for casual work done around the church. They did commission such work, both from tradesmen and from various of the poor, and the very detailed accounts which show what they paid out for such work, and to whom, never before or after included James Clarke. It would have been surprising if they ever had included his name, as he was no tradesman.

I have already pointed out that he was the diarist's cousin,[10] but James Clarke was also a physician by profession, one of the last to

qualify by apprenticeship (the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons was already established by this period), who had been apprenticed to his father until – as the diary points out – 1 January 1767. Clarke senior was a well-respected physician with a national reputation as an inoculist, using Dimsdale's famous method, who maintained a successful hospital for fashionable people under inoculation against smallpox. Woodforde's diary shows, in an entry only a few weeks after James Clarke's apprenticeship had expired, that James, to whom the diarist never at this time refers as "Doctor Clarke", was already working as a physician:

> ... I was bleeded this morning by Mr. James Clarke, and had ten ounces of blood taken from me – for which I gave him – 2 – 6
> N.B. My blood was very rich, & therefore proper to be bled ...

James Clarke, then, hardly needed to turn his hand to a bit of carpentry, unless, as in this case, there was an urgent need to do so on principle.

It was not long before events came to a head again. On 11 September 1768 Woodforde records:

> ... The Singers in C. Cary Church kept out Mr. Creed's Man again from coming into the gallery – Mr. Creed therefore is determined to seek for redress –
> Mr. Creed & Mr. Hindley made a Visit to the Parsonage this morning ...

Creed was obviously very angry, though the cordial relationship between Woodforde and Creed continued for the time being, as the following day's diary entry showed:

> ... I dined, supped & spent the Evening at Justice Creed's with him, his Father and Mr. Hindley ...

Two days after this, there is another visit to the Parsonage. This time the diarist feels compromised; the threat of legal action has almost become a reality and he is torn between his loyalty to his friend Creed and what he knows to be the strong local support for the churchwardens. Woodforde's anxiety is revealed in this incoherent entry, for 14 September 1768 :

> ... Mr. Hindley & Justice Creed called at Parsonage this Evening in their Chair to ask me to Dinner to Morrow to talk about going to Wells with them Friday con=
> =cerning the Gallery work to wait on the Bishop, but I shall not go, (I believe) nor interfere at all con=
> =cerning it but to live peaceably with all men –
> It is a little unreasonable to desire it, as I must

then fly in the face of almost all my Parishioners –
Great & many are the Divisions in C. Cary –
almost irreconcilable –
Give us peace O Lord. With Thee all things are possible.

Needless to say, he continued to dine at the Justice's house – twice in the next three days – though he kept on resisting the pressure to go with Hindley and Creed to Wells.

By 1 November, Creed had carried out his threat to bring an action in the Consistory court at Wells. The diarist writes that the two churchwardens

... are cited to appear the 9. Instant for not pre=
=senting at the last Visitation, some particular People
for making disturbances in C. Cary Church &c.
I am really sorry that there is so much likelihood of
Endless Quarrels in the town of C. Cary ...

The case was not heard on 9 November, but under the firm conviction that it would be, the scandalous events of the evening of 5 November went ahead in the way described in the diary entry for that day.

By December, Woodforde and Creed were hardly on speaking terms. As Woodforde records on 11 December:

... N.B. Justice Creed was at Church & behaved very shy to me ...

Christmas came without further mention in the diary of the pending legal action. On 24 December, the singers appeared as usual at the parsonage, to give what Woodforde has referred to elsewhere in the diary as "the old song"[11] and to receive their usual shilling from the vicar, and another from his son, the curate; but here we learn something of great interest, which might hold a clue to the reason for the organ being removed from the gallery. This entry reads:

... It being Christmas Eve we had the New Singers of
C. Cary this Evening at Parsonage & they having
been at great expence in learning to sing my Father
& myself gave them double that we used to do, &
therefore instead of one Shilling we each gave – 0 - 2 - 0

To understand this entry we have to look back in the diary to well before the dispute in question; to 1764, in fact, when the usual Christmas Eve entry read:

... the new Singers came very late this Evening, and
they sung a Christmas Carol and an Anthem
and they had Cyder as usual and – 0 - 2 - 6
The old Singers did not come at all; and I
have heard that they have given it over ...

So one group of gallery singers had replaced another, and, it appears, had gone to the trouble of actually learning to sing. Not only that, but they were paying money to do so. We learn later in the diary that a singing teacher was involved, Hooper, doubtless one of the peripatetic kind associated with these gallery singers and among those responsible for teaching the "New Way" of singing.[12]

Neither the diary nor the churchwardens' accounts sets a reason for the removal of the organ from the gallery. Allow me therefore to speculate; though I should point out that later evidence shows that although the organ might have been unused, it did not necessarily need to be removed simply to provide more space for singers and instruments in the gallery. In another diary entry (see below) on 7 February 1769, Woodforde records that there was room in the gallery for far more people than the thirty or so singers.

I would go so far as to suggest that for the new Cary singers, the problem with the organ might have been that it was something associated with the old Cary singers, and therefore worthy of disposal, given the new learning which they had acquired from Hooper the singing-master. This would be - you might argue - a conclusion too far, were it not for the fact that we know that the man who seemed to be the leader of the Cary singers, James Clarke, played the bass viol, a most suitable instrument with which to provide the bass part.[13]

15 March of the year of the dispute provides the reference we need:

> ... Justice Creed made me a Visit this morning, and my Brother gave him a Song whilst James Clarke performed on his Base [sic] Viol ...

It may indeed be that James Clarke is doing here what contemporary accounts tell us other groups of singers did, attempting to establish a kind of authority – a dominance which they sought to exercise within the church, though outside the local church hierarchy. Granted, not all of them did it by physically annexing a portion of the church, but I am confident that I can demonstrate with later extracts from the diary that this particular group of singers, by means of what we would now call industrial action, sought to do just that.

The new year – 1769 – began quietly. The parish clerk, David Maby, dined with Woodforde at the Parsonage on 1 January and the rest of that month passed with Woodforde continuing to record in his diary the services he conducted at Castle Cary and Ansford.

The problems had not gone away, however, and on both 7 and 9 February, the diarist was called to meetings at the George Inn:

> ... Dr. Clarke spent part of the Afternoon at Parsonage, he came to the Parsonage to desire my Father or me to meet some Gentlemen at the George Inn at Cary this Evening to endeavour to compromise matters with regard to a Law-Suit that is now carrying on between Justice Creed on the one Part and the Church-Wardens of Cary on the other; accordingly I went with the Doctor down to the George as my Father would not & there I supped &c. – Dr. Clarke, Mr. Pew, Mr. Tom Burge, Uncle Tom, Mr. White, Painter Clarke and the two Church-Wardens Seth Burge and David Maby were all present – It was proposed that as the Gallery at Cary Church was large enough to contain between 3 and 4 Score People and the Singers not being above 30. in Number that there should be a Partition made in the Gallery for the Singers, and the other Part open to any Body, and also for Mr. Creed to pay his own costs & the Parish the other but the Church-Wardens would not come into it, therefore Hostilities are likely to be very great indeed –

This was not, of course the partition which Mr Hadley had been paid to make; that was in June of the previous year and related to moving the organ down into the body of the church, and this passage also shows that the materials – nails, a lock and hinges – which had been supplied by James Clarke had indeed been used to close off the gallery and not merely to partition it.

At the second of these meetings, agreement was reached in the terms set out in the previous entry:

> ... which Proposals will I hope be agreeable to each contending Party, which will prevent much Strife.

though Justice Creed was not at the meeting. As events yet to take place in the church will reveal, it is likely that Mr Burge senior[14] acted on Creed's behalf.

The matter was settled then, and no doubt everyone felt greatly relieved. The dispute had been a serious matter, one which had threatened to destabilise some of the most important relationships in this relatively small community. The churchwardens' accounts for the period show how seriously they took the dispute. We do not know what amount of money Creed had to spend in terms of the entering of his plea in the Consistory court, but the Cary churchwardens visited Wells three times during February 1769,

paying on the first occasion 8/- in travelling expenses and 3/6d for the opinion of a Proctor,[15] and on the second occasion £2/19/8d for his legal advice and 4/6d to have the Apparitor of the court send a letter on their behalf.

I should mention here that the case was never fully heard. It appears to have been referred on at least one occasion, and the out-of-court terms of settlement agreed by all parties before it was re-presented. Roy Winstanley is of the opinion that a preliminary case was heard on 9 November 1768, though the churchwardens' accounts show no disbursements in respect of travel to Wells at that time. It is, of course, possible that one of the undated entries in the accounts was a reimbursement for travel to that hearing. By 12 February 1769, Woodforde was happily able to record in his diary that:

> ... M^{r}. Titcomb & his Boys &c. sat in part of the Gallery & the Singers in the other part – and very harmonious –

He was a local schoolmaster. The diarist is not, of course, referring to the output of the singers in that entry when he says that all was very harmonious;[16] but sad to say, Woodforde's happiness was to be short-lived, for the singers were yet to exact that retribution which they felt to be their due.

Before this, however, and only two weeks after the agreement reached at the George Inn, there was another small territorial dispute involving the William Burge who had acted on Creed's behalf. This is Woodforde's entry for 19 February 1769:

> ... no singing at Cary on old M^{r}. Burges Account as reported he sending persons up into the Singing Part of the Gallery, which was lately agreed on the contrary –

The singers were back the following week, though, and in venomous form. Poor Woodforde had to record on 26 February:

> ... the 36. Psalm was sung this Afternoon in Cary Church by the Singers – done out of Pique to old Will^{m} Burge – Old M^{r}. Burge concerns himself too much with the Singers –

The Tate and Brady metrical "New Version"[17] of Psalm 36 is well-chosen venom at its best:

> My crafty foe with flattering art His wicked purpose would disguise,
> But reason whispers to my heart, No fear of God before his eyes.
>
> He soothes himself, retir'd from sight; Secure he thinks his treach'rous game,
> Till his dark plots, exposed to light, Their false contriver brand with shame.

His wakeful malice spends the night In forging his accurst designs,
His obstinate ungen'rous spite No execrable means declines.

This action, too, had its consequences in several meetings, in which even Woodforde senior, who had thus far managed to stay clear of the controversy, got involved.

What the singers may have seen as a victory over Justice Creed, and, perhaps, as a victory over all of those who did not enjoy what must now have seemed to be the invulnerable status of a Cary singer, seems to have imbued them with a confidence which they seem not to have had previously, and, to the diarist's displeasure, they begin to try to dictate matters in the church during services. Things came to a head on 12 November 1769:

I read Prayers and Preached this morning at C. Cary Church –
I was disturbed this morning at Cary Church by the Singers –
I sent my Clerk some time back by the Cary Singers, to desire
that they would not sing the Responses in the Communion
Service, which they complied with for several Sundays,
but this morning after the first Commandment they
had the impudence to sing the Response, and therefore
I spoke to them out of my Desk, to say & not sing the Responses,
which they did after, and at other Places they sung as usual –
N.B. There was no singing this Afternoon at Ansford.
The Singers in the Gallery were John Coleman the Baker,
Jonathan Croker, Will^{m} Pew Jun^{r}., Tho^{s}. Penny, Will^{m} Ashford,
Hooper the Singing Master, James Lucas, Peter M^{r}. Francis's
Man, M^{r}. Melliars Man James, Farmer Hix's son, Robert
Sweets, and the two young Dunfords –

This must have thoroughly upset Woodforde. He was an Oxford man, who had little time for dissenters,[18] and had he lived into the mid-nineteenth century I am certain from many references in the diary that he would have espoused Tractarianism very cheerfully indeed.

Coincidentally, John Wesley's diary records a similar instance, some twenty years earlier when, on Sunday 4 February 1750, he writes:

I preached at Hayes ... the church was filled ... and all behaved well but the singers, whom I therefore reproved before the congregation, and some of them were ashamed ...

The diary entry for 12 November 1769 is the only one in which we are told the names of some of the Cary singers. We know that there were up to thirty of them and that James Clarke was among their

number, but they are otherwise anonymous. This is also the entry that confirms the activity of a singing-master, the Hooper to whom Woodforde referred as having taught them singing.

So who were these singers? The diary allows us to identify some of them – and Mr Winstanley has kindly filled some gaps in my knowledge. John Coleman is obvious; he is the baker in Cary, though there is another John Coleman, who was at one time parish clerk and therefore known as Clerk Coleman; Jonathan Croker is either the publican who kept the Royal Oak in Castle Cary, or a member of that family; William Pew junior was the son of a successful tradesman, merchant and carrier in Cary, the man who, in a memorable diary entry of Woodforde's at the height of the gallery dispute "brought me a dozen more spitting Basons from Oxford by his waggon"; Thomas Penny was the brother of Robin Penny, a clergyman who was Samuel Woodforde's curate for a time, and later rose to be the Duke of Beaufort's Domestic Chaplain; William Ashford or Aishford is identified only as a resident of Castle Cary; Hooper we already know of and I have found only one further diary reference to him; James Lucas is, like Croker, either the publican of that name, from the Angel Inn of which Edward Rack spoke well, or of that family; and the rest, apart from the two whom we can assume to be schoolboys, are servants.

I would refer at this point to John Beresford, the editor of the 1935 edition of the diary, and point to what he mentions as one of the characteristics of the eighteenth century – the good fellowship between different classes and sections of society and the relative absence of that snobbishness which was so much to characterize the next century. We have here a gallery band comprising *inter alia* one physician, one baker, two publicans, one carrier and several domestic servants. It is not possible to say who among them fomented such strife, but two weeks later they again stayed away from church. The diary for 26 November:

> ...N.B. No singing this morning, the Singers not being at Church, they being highly affronted with me at what I lately had done.

Note, please, that the diarist does not refer to singers being at church, but not putting in an appearance in the gallery; no singers were present in the building at all, implying a planned co-ordinated absence.

This was not enough for the singers, though, for the diary for 17 December 1769 shows that they were not yet sated. Woodforde, in

the diary entry, refers only to "some people" as the target of the attack, but their intention is quite clear, the first verse of the metrical psalm showing that the parson's choice of words might hide his own offended dignity and reveal the singers' opinion of Woodforde himself in the context of the gallery dispute:

> ...the Singers at Cary did not please me this Afternoon by singing the 12. Psalm – New Version – reflecting on some People –

Here is the full savour of the final revenge of Cary singers:

> Since Godly men decay, O Lord, Do then my cause defend,
> For scarce these wretched days afford One just and faithful friend.
>
> One neighbour now can scarce believe What t'other does impart,
> With flattering lips they all deceive And with a double heart.
>
> But lips that with deceit abound Can never prosper long,
> God's righteous vengeance will confound The proud
> blaspheming tongue.
>
> In vain these foolish boasters say "Our Tongues are sure our own";
> With doubtful words we'll still betray, And be controul'd by none'.
>
> But God, who hears the suff'ring poor, And their oppression knows,
> Will soon arise and give them best, In spite of all their foes.
>
> Then shall the wicked be perplexed, Nor know what way to fly;
> When those whom they despis'd and vex'd, Shall be advanced on high.

There is, as I am sure you will agree, little room for mis-interpretation.

Let me now conclude with some general reflections on what the diary entries relating to this dispute have told us.

In the case of the bands of gallery singers with whom Woodforde came into contact,[19] there is evidence that their arrival was a matter of their choice, with the incumbent often unaware of their intention to sing on that day. Their absences, too, appear to have been well co-ordinated. The organised disobedience of the Cary singers reinforces the impression that they were independent of the church itself and felt themselves to be above or beyond the control of the clergy.

The churchwardens' accounts for Castle Cary for the whole period from 1708 to the mid-nineteenth century show no disbursements whatever in respect of the Cary singers, other than the materials used by James Clarke to block off the gallery; no instruments were bought, no reeds or strings renewed, no manuscript books or printed editions of music were purchased. This is in contrast with the

bellringers of the church, whose every need – right down to polish and ropes – was supplied and recorded in the accounts. In addition, the bellringers were paid a specific sum for each ringing on visitations, presentations and feast days. No payment to any singer is recorded in the churchwardens' accounts.

It was to be the end of the "Trouble in the Gallery". After this point in the diary, Woodforde only very infrequently refers to the singers in the galleries of his churches at Castle Cary, Ansford or Weston Longville and when he does, it is usually in favourable terms, the performance of some neighbouring singers during his Norfolk years receiving quite favourable comment.

The diary cannot tell us what became of the Cary singers[20] after 1769, because Woodforde moved permanently to his Norfolk living in May 1776. Cary Creed, the unwitting villain of the piece, died in 1775 and was buried in Cary Church. His death was a blow to James Woodforde. The lifetime interest in Creed's pew in Cary church was sold to his executors for five guineas, one of whom, curiously enough, was William Pew, the father of one of Cary singers and the other John Tidcombe or Titcombe, the schoolmaster.

The gallery, so the churchwardens' accounts tell us, survived as a singing gallery only until 1810, at which point "two new winges [sic]" were added at a cost of £116/0/7d. In 1812, the people of Castle Cary once again purchased an organ, at a cost of £200.

By 1833, there was enough general disquiet within the church of England for a reform movement to have grown up, centred around four clergymen – Keble, Pusey, Froude and Newman,[21] all fellows of Oxford colleges. They felt that as a result of the Reform Act of 1832, the church was no longer in the safe keeping of "churchmen", and the movement, at first called the Oxford Movement, but later to be known as the Tractarians, after the series of ninety publications 'Tracts of the Times' (1833-41), favoured a return to a more formal, more Catholic Anglicanism, which would have been only too eagerly espoused by the conservative Woodforde. Their attentions were not focused specifically on the gallery singers; they were motivated by the general state of decay, and what they saw as the principal threat to the church, secular political control by "Liberals and Dissenters"; but the time was ripe for change.

The move towards formality meant the end of the singers generally and the emergence of surpliced choirs. Though a few remain, most

of the wooden galleries were torn down, the instruments disposed of, and the music dispersed to the Baptist and Methodist chapels, to the curious "Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion" (a Calvinistic form of Methodism), and to the village inns and alehouses. By the late 1870's, almost nothing remained.

NOTES

1. In 1759, at a cost of £18/10/-d. Churchwardens' accounts for the year.
2. There were no hymns, as such. Only psalms would have been sung in churches during this period.
3. Samuel Pepys refers in his diary to a particular psalm taking over one hour to sing.
4. Though the new music did not entirely exclude the organ. Some of the printed music for gallery bands has "figured bass" parts indicated, which would have allowed an organist to provide a bass continuo.
5. Tunes so complicated that they would have defied any congregation to join in.
6. Here I must acknowledge my indebtedness to his article 'Towards a Social History of Castle Cary: Justice Creed and the Cary Singers' which was published in the Winter issue of the Journal of the Parson Woodforde Society, in 1974.
7. The lowest level of ecclesiastical court; this was not a civil law suit.
8. And almost fifty years before Catholic emancipation.
9. Which, according to the church wardens' accounts, was the first pew on the north side of the middle aisle, opposite the reading desk.
10. Not only that; he was his nephew by marriage too, as Woodforde's sister was James Clarke's stepmother.
11. Which may well have been the words we know as "While Shepherds Watched" to any one of the many tunes with which it is associated.
12. Polyphonic music for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass) with instruments rather than the "Old Way" of the lined-out decorated melodic kind, with organ accompaniment.
13. Given that it was an instrument which (as it had gut "frets") was capable of chords and arpeggios, it could also have supplied the bass continuo mentioned earlier.
14. Mr William Burge, that is, the individual of whom I wrote as joining in as the bandwagon gained momentum, and not Seth Burge, his nephew, who was churchwarden.
15. A manager of causes in an ecclesiastical court.
16. Though he did comment on their performance in just a very few diary entries.
17. As opposed to the older Sternhold & Bennett versions of the metrical psalms.
18. Elsewhere in the diary he refers to a group of such people at a wedding: "the whole set are rank Presbyterians".
19. Including those of Mattishall and Tuddenham churches, who would arrive from time to time at his church during the Weston Longville years.
20. Other than in individual terms.
21. Newman, of course, shifted his allegiance totally to the Church of Rome in 1845.

NOTES AND QUERIES

Norfolk Beefans, the correspondence continues

Mr Will Stevens writes:

The word 'pressure' is probably the key to Dickens' (not excessively funny) joke. The following quotation from *The Book of Apples* by Joan Morgan and Alison Richards, Ebury Press, 1993 makes it all clear. (This book is a treasure house of information for anyone interested in apples):

> 'Norfolk Beefing' – "Apple has tough, rather dry flesh and tough skin, which allows fruit to be baked without bursting. They were put in the bread ovens, after the bread had been removed, and an iron plate was placed on top to press the air out."

From the early nineteenth century, Biffins packed in boxes were despatched by Norwich bakers as presents and to London fruiterers. Commercial operations waned in 1914, but Biffins were on sale up to the 1950s. In the nineteenth century, they were grown in gardens all over the country, also for market, recommended for drying. By the early 1900s, they were "not much grown, but many trees still found in Norfolk". Dickens seems to be suggesting that Biffins were deficient in flavour; presumably the pressing and drying process was a primitive method of preservation which enabled them to be eaten out of season but which did nothing for the flavour. I have a vague recollection of seeing dried and flattened apples in a television programme a few years ago. Whether it was filmed in Norfolk, I simply cannot recall.

It would be interesting to hear if any of the experts on the diary can find any evidence that Woodforde or his contemporaries ever treated apples in this way.

Ms Hilda Clark is also interested in old apple trees and wrote to the National Fruit Tree collection at Brogdale, Faversham, Kent, to inquire whether *Beefans* still exist. Her correspondents supplied the information that the Norfolk Beefing was first recorded in 1807. Woodforde is our authority to prove the inaccuracy of this.

A guide to local conservation is available from The Common Ground, 45 Shelton Street, London WC2H 9HJ. It is a paperback pamphlet, costs £4.95, and contains a list of all Norfolk apples, fruit farms and orchards.

As a postscript to the above, I obtained a very young "beefing" (so labelled by a Norfolk fruit tree specialist) in November 1994. I await its first fruits with much interest.

How now brown cow?

In a recent Journal, one of a number of stories about animals from the diary concerned the "Old Cow, Patty, about 10. Years old, subject to the Gargutt & of bad temper also". She was sold by her late owner for £5. *Shorter OED* spells the condition as 'Garget'. It gives two quite separate definitions of the word: 1. "An inflamed condition of the head and throat in cattle and pigs; 2. "Inflammation of a cow's or ewe's udder". (1725)

Perhaps the butcher had a poor bargain here and may have found difficulty in getting his customers to accept 10 year old beef. To eat it must have been like trying to chew one's way through an iron bar. But, it appears not, after all. In his 'Farmer's Diary', Paul Heiney writes:

> ... older animals have more flavour. ... I know a farmer who sent his ten year old cow which, with patient hanging and butchery, produced the most tasty steak ever set before him."
>
> *Times, 21/10/1995*

Letters and enquiries to: Mrs Ann Elliott, The Green Corner, Deopham Green, Wymondham, Norfolk NR18 9AB.

ANOTHER ANIMAL STORY FROM THE DIARY

Poor Punch and his Skin

[1792]

May – 16 – Wednesday
... My poor old Horse, Punch, that had been bad
for a long time and now unable to get up
was shot by Ben this Morning to put him
out of his misery – no shadow of his being better –

May – 26 – Saturday
... Sent Ben early this morning on Phyllis
After News-Papers, Fish &c. He returned about 2.
o'clock, brought home some Maccarel &c.
He carried poor Punch's Skin to Norwich to sell
sold it for $^{s}9/6^{d}$ – which I gave to him & Boy –
Dinner to day, Maccarel, Calfs Fry &c.
[on the blotting paper]
Ben gave the Boy out of the Skin – $^{s}3/0^{d}$

– M.S. Diary

THE PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

The Society was founded in 1968 by the Rev. Canon L. Rule Wilson and may be said to have two main aims: one, to extend and develop knowledge of James Woodforde's life and the society in which he lived, and the other, to provide opportunity for fellow enthusiasts to meet together from time to time in places associated with the diarist, and to exchange news and views.

Membership of the Parson Woodforde Society is open to any person of the age of 18 years and over upon successful application and upon payment of the subscription then in force, subject only to the power of the committee to limit membership to a prescribed number.

The Annual membership subscription of £10 (overseas members £20) becomes due on 1 January and should be forwarded to the Treasurer, Dr David Case, 7 Eden Close, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 6BG.

PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY COMMITTEE 1995/6

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